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# THE EUROPEAN IN INDIA



## CAMEOS OF INDIAN CRIME

STUDIES OF NATIVE CRIMINALITY IN INDIA. By

H. J. A. HERVEY (Indian Telegraphs, retired). Demy

8vo, cloth gilt, illustrated, 12s. 6d. net.

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LONDON: STANLEY PAUL & CO., 31 ESSEX STREET, W.C.





MR. H. J. A. HERVEY.

*Frontispiece* ]

# THE EUROPEAN IN INDIA

BY

H. HERVEY

AUTHOR OF "CAMEOS OF INDIAN CRIME" ETC.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

LONDON

STANLEY PAUL & CO  
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# CONTENTS

## PART I

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE MILITARY MAN . . . . .	1
II. THE SAILOR MAN . . . . .	7
III. THE COVENANTED CIVILIAN . . . . .	12
IV. THE UNCOVENANTED CIVILIAN . . . . .	17
V. THE MEDICAL MAN . . . . .	23
VI. THE CHURCHMAN . . . . .	28
VII. THE MERCHANT . . . . .	33
VIII. THE PRESSMAN . . . . .	39
IX. THE RAILWAY MAN . . . . .	45
X. THE PLANTER . . . . .	50
XI. THE BANKER . . . . .	55
XII. THE POLICEMAN . . . . .	60
XIII. THE TRADESMAN . . . . .	65
XIV. THE DOMICILED PENSIONER . . . . .	70
XV. THE CRANK, OR FADDIST . . . . .	75
XVI. THE CHARITABLE MAN . . . . .	80
XVII. THE UNCHARITABLE MAN . . . . .	85
XVIII. THE GLOBE-TROTTER . . . . .	90
XIX. THE LOAFER . . . . .	95
XX. THE GOOD-ALL-ROUND MAN . . . . .	100

## PART II

I. THE FAST MARRIED WOMAN . . . . .	105
II. THE STAID MARRIED WOMAN . . . . .	110
III. THE ATTACHED MISS . . . . .	115
IV. THE UNATTACHED MISS . . . . .	120
V. THE GRASS-WIDOW . . . . .	125
VI. THE "SCORPION" . . . . .	130
VII. THE OLD MAID . . . . .	135
VIII. THE REIGNING BELLE . . . . .	139
IX. THE PASSÉE BELLE . . . . .	144
X. THE GOODY-GOODY WOMAN . . . . .	149

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MR. H. J. A. HERVEY . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
COMPETITORS AT THE KADIR CUP MEETING . . . . .	FACING PAGE 17
AN AMBULANCE DEMONSTRATION—CALCUTTA 1ST DIVISION .	32
SORTING TEA . . . . .	49
AFTERNOON TEA ON THE LAWN—CALCUTTA . . . . .	64
THE OPENING OF DHARAMPORE SANATORIUM . . . . .	81
A TRAVELLERS' BUNGALOW—SCINDE . . . . .	96
A SHOOTING PARTY . . . . .	113
A DRAWING-ROOM AT SIALKOT . . . . .	128
THE NEW UNITED SERVICE CLUB CHALET, SIMLA . . . . .	145
A BEDROOM AT SIALKOT . . . . .	160
NAINI TAL, LOOKING DOWN THE LAKE FROM MIDDLE CHEENA MALL . . . . .	209
THE CLUB—PURI . . . . .	224
"SLEEPING OUT" IN THE HOT WEATHER . . . . .	225
THE NEW BENGAL CLUB—READING-ROOM . . . . .	240
A WEDDING RECEPTION . . . . .	297

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# THE EUROPEAN IN INDIA

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### THE MILITARY MAN

WHAT gives Britain her hold on India and her millions? Love, compatibility of interests, tastes, religion, tradition, nationality, think you—such as Prussia, for instance, now exercises over Saxony, Bavaria, etc., or Turkey with her Arabs and Egyptians? No! Is it due to the Eurasian blood-link, the result of initial inter-marriage? Have these hybrids a two-sided sympathy which acts as a bond 'twixt the two races? No again. The Eurasian is all for us: he has nothing—or very little—in accord with the sons of the soil; for whenever a racial disturbance occurs, has not the Eurasian always fallen in under the Flag? And notably, in the great crisis of 1857-58, did he not perform yeoman service for Britain? Yes! In spite, then, of what sundry noodles prate to the contrary, India is held for us solely by the Military Man, the subject of this chapter, and at whom let us take a glance without further preamble.

To begin with the General Officer. In these

days he is not the dotard old veteran of the past : one who had to be helped into the saddle when he went to parade ; one who would bore you with dry-as-dust narratives of his bygone career, relating them in a monotonous minor key, and chuckling senilely at any jocosity, whether you join in or not. No : our General, thanks to the existing Service system, is an active, middle-aged individual, who rides hard, races, plays polo, and in the grey dawn at sham-fights tears about the field in a manner that makes the youngest of his staff sit up ; for they must follow him—to the devil, if need be. So with the Field Officers : you find no grandfathers and corpulencies among them. These seniors are no stick-at-homes ; you meet them everywhere : find them in force at all Society functions, such as dinners and dances ; while at their own mess tables they are a power in themselves. The same as regards the younger men, captains and subalterns, but with this difference, that whereas the elders are mostly “ married and done for,” the latter, being still marketable, are more in request with the fair sex, who pet and pamper them—that is, if they do the agreeable, and, above all, do not spare the “ soft-sawder.”

While fully enjoying the lighter side of life, the Military Man in India—as a body—is somewhat unmindful of the “ better part.” He goes to church regularly on Sundays—bound to by the rules of the Service ; he may also be seriously inclined, but in these days he does not show it ; and though a soldier of the Cross, we do not find him militantly aggressive. He will pour out his blood for “ Kirk and King,” but he does not play the missionary nowadays. Time was when

our Military Man not unfrequently went about with sword in one hand and Bible in the other. He who dealt with British soldiers in this fashion did not do much harm, but he who tried it on with the Sepoys created an incalculable amount of mischief; for one of the main causes of the Great Mutiny was undoubtedly attributable to the proselytising efforts of such misguided men. At no period have these zealots received open encouragement from the authorities; while after 1857-58 we believe they were sternly put down, and ever since the missionary proper has had the field to himself.

When in former times the Military Man was seldom seen out of his uniform, even when not on duty, he of the present—sheds it as soon as he can. Who knows? Perhaps the glamour attaching to the red or blue coat—as compared with the ruling khaki—had something to do with it. Anyhow, now the militario doffs his harness directly he “knocks off,” and appears in comfortable *mufti* on all other occasions.

Soon after the abdication of “Good Old John Company” in favour of the Crown in 1858, there arose an ill-feeling between the “Queen’s” and the “Sepoy” officers; brother-Britons for all that, and who had hitherto pulled well together. Under a mistaken notion of superiority, the former looked down on the latter, and the latter naturally resented such attitude. The chief cause for this lay in a prejudice entertained by the “Queen’s” against all things native—curry-and-rice, as an eatable, being a prominent example. With the Rebellion, all those unconnected with the “Sepoy” army hated the native, and religiously tabooed

everything suggestive of him—above all, his food, much of which had crept into the general dietary, especially the aforesaid curry-and-rice. Early in 1859 a noted European infantry regiment came south from Bengal to a Madras station—held by two “Sepoy” corps. This British regiment, which was originally on the Company’s establishment, had under the new régime been incorporated with the Line, and now figured as “Royals.” The officers were proved soldiers, for they had been through the recent Mutiny; but becoming “Royals,” they set to and strictly barred everything—no matter what—that savoured of the East. If you dined with them, you would find no curry-and-rice or anything of that sort on their mess or private tables. If they dined with you, they pointedly declined to partake of that or any other Oriental dish you might offer them. A good deal of bile resulted, and a quarrel was imminent, when the following incident fortunately nipped it in the bud. Colonel H——, the senior “Sepoy” commandant, had his wife and daughter with him. Both ladies were particularly incensed at the behaviour of the “Royals,” and Emily H—— determined to pay them out—when she could. Her opportunity soon came. The usual mess dinners between “Royals” and “Sepoys” had taken place, by which time it was patent that the former regarded the latter with contempt. Then there were private dinners: the H——s held theirs; among the guests being the O.C. of the “Royals,” Colonel R——, and his wife. In the course of the feast, curry-and-rice was handed round. The “Sepoy” element helped themselves, but the “Royals” refused it; Mrs.

R—— doing so with a gesture of repugnance. Seeing this, Mrs. H—— rather pointedly exclaimed, “Will you not have some curry-and-rice, Mrs. R—— ? ”

“No, thank you,” replied that lady ; adding, as she gave a little shudder : “It is what the servants eat, and never appears on my table.”

This remark threatened to bring on ructions there and then ; but, luckily, Colonel H—— averted the danger by adroitly changing the subject.

Well, soon afterwards, Emily H——, in engaging a new dog-boy, noticed that his latest certificate was from Colonel R—— ; so she asked the imp why he had left. He said that when the master was away at orderly room, the Colonel’s lady required him to fan her every day between twelve and one while she ate some food which the *ayah* brought her in the drawing-room, and that the mistress always cried in the process of her meal. He was not paid to fan people, so he had resigned.

The lad’s information gave Miss H—— her cue. She told her parents, but begged them to make no sign till she had matured her plans.

In due course, the R——s in their turn regaled the H——s ; and the latter, after a suitable interval, had to pay them their “digestion visit.”

Calling hours proper ranged from eleven to two ; but during the hot season—as it was then—most people did their visiting in the evening, betwixt five and six. At Emily’s request, however, the H——s adhered to the regulation time ; and one stifling day, at about twelve-thirty, their bullock coach crawled noiselessly up the sandy drive to the R——s’ porch. All was quiet. The tailor—the only one in the front veranda—slumbered as he

sat ; every aperture was closed, and bamboo blinds lowered—against the glare. On the coach halting, the driver—by Emily's instructions—climbed down, crept up to the sleeper and gently awoke him. The startled tailor, divining visitors, staggered out, clutched the cards, and, still half-asleep, invited the callers in ; he preceding them—to raise the blind and push open the door. In walked the H——s, to see—what ? The “ Royal ” Mrs. R—— squatted on the sofa, demolishing a plate of curry-and-rice ! The curry was obviously fiery with chillies, for as Mrs. R—— stared aghast at the unexpected, unannounced intruders, her eyes “ ran water ”—the “ crying ” as described by the dog-boy ! Then, realising that she had been properly caught,—enjoying the very stuff for which she and her set evinced such contempt ; stuff that “ the servants eat, and which never appeared on her table,”—the wretched woman uttered a shriek of dismay and fled from the room !

Chuckling with satisfaction, the H——s hastily retreated, and of course did not scruple to publish abroad what they had discovered ; the consequences of which were that from that day the “ Royals ” began to mend their manners, while the forbidden curry-and-rice gradually reappeared on their tables.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SAILOR MAN

EXCEPT along the coast-line, and that too at the largest ports, the Sailor Man—whatever his rating, whether in the Royal Navy, Line, or Tramp ship—is somewhat of a rarity in India. Occasionally, when a cruiser is in port, some one of her officers with friends or relatives at an up-country station takes the railway on short leave to pay them a visit, where he reigns as a nine days' wonder for the time of his stay, and gets lionised to the top of his bent; the said friends or relations putting on no little "side" on the strength of having a member of "the King's Navee" to show round to their fellow-exotics. He is in evidence, however, at Colombo and Bombay: his ship seldom touches elsewhere unless for some special cause. Tradition has it that in the "wind-jammer" days British warships frequently called at Pondicherry, and that the crews used to have a gay time with the French. The putting in of a Naval Squadron at Colombo or Bombay is a signal for festive amenities; and while local Society receives the officers, the bluejackets also come ashore and enjoy themselves in blue-jacket fashion.

The Naval Officer of our day is not to be confounded with he of the Marryat type. His parlance is free of all salt-sea savour; nor does the "cut of his jib" proclaim his connection with the "ocean blue." In most cases he is clean shaven, has no

roll in his gait, and in India he comes ashore in *mufti*; for, like his military congener, he offs with his uniform directly he has done with duty. You will find his phraseology as good as yours: if you expect to hear him give vent to such expressions as "Holy Moses," "Shiver my timbers," "Take the quid out of my mouth" or "the slack out of my sheets," or slang a native by dubbing him "a burgoo-swilling son of a—er—a gun," you'll be a bit out; or if you meet a handy-man ashore, and ask him how he fares on board ship, he will not tell you that he gets "dog's body," or "cracker hash," and "bilge" for his meat and drink.

Colombo and Bombay give a ball in honour of a visiting squadron, at which our Naval Officer displays none of those characteristics one is apt to associate him with. As "Jack" is popularly supposed to cut a sorry figure on horseback, so must he be awkward and *gauche* in a ballroom; they think that his habitual sea-legs will militate against his shining in the light fantastic. No greater delusion exists; he will foot it with the best dancer there, and no woman who has had a Naval Officer for her partner in a dance will find him a "lubber" at it. You will seldom see him—disguised though he is in civilian clothes—openly knocking about in certain parts of the town: he will not have anything to do with those low-class natives who, when landing-parties come off from the warships, haunt the *bunders* or quays, and offer to show the way to drinking-hells, gambling-hells, and other hells. True, these rascals may inveigle a group of middies who are prone to get into scrapes of sorts; but the youngsters are generally rescued



by their own bluejackets whose footsteps have tended the same way.

The Liner Officer, when he goes ashore in India, has a great pull over the Naval Man in point of friends and acquaintances, especially he of the P. & O. mail boats, which take so many of us to and fro the two countries. Sponson may visit almost any station with a good chance of unearthing folks—oftener women—who have voyaged with him. He will tell you that the old *Umbeyla*, being considered too slow for the mails, now runs with cargo and passengers to Calcutta and Madras; that her popular skipper has been lifted to command their new *Gargantua*; that Pootles, the jolly little “third,” who was so useful in getting up high-jinks, is now “second” in his old ship; that Mrs. Squill,—you remember her?—who went the pace with that R.F.A. major, ended in levanting with the gallant gunner; that old Twist, who was generally “three sheets in the wind,” died of D.T.; and that he—Sponson—will be “chief” on his next trip; and so on.

The Tramp Officer is rather looked down upon by the Liner; although the former boasts of a white crew, while the latter has Asiatic lascars. Anyhow, in these days he presents the nearest approach to the ideal “sea-dog.” He is rough, but generally a diamond for all that. Unless you are accustomed to the man, you will find the Tramp Skipper’s speech somewhat obscure. In the course of an ordinary palaver he will “Shiver the mizzen,” measure a fraction of time with “the shake of a dog’s tail,” and, as a mild form of emphatic asseveration, he will further fog you with the occult adjuration of “By my sister’s cat’s

kittens." On board his steamer his dress is distinctly *négligé*; he affects nothing answering to uniform, and is hardly distinguishable from the members of his cosmopolite European crew—for, be it said, he may count no more than one or two British sailors among a crowd of Scandinavians, Hollanders, and Levantines. He smokes like a furnace; is always provided with an oily briar, a chunk of stick cavendish, and a clasp-knife to cut it with. He spits to windward, no matter the direction, and only when at leisure, seated on his tiny poop, is he furnished with a mat spittoon or a slush bucket. While at sea, even in the tropics, he wears an ordinary bargee's sort of cap, staying for hours in the blazing sun on his unawn-inged bridge, or busy on some other part of the deck. When he goes ashore, however, he "togs out" in a blue serge reefer suit, and adorns his head with a pith sun-hat generally of such Brobdingnagian dimensions every way as to set you wondering where he obtained it. Thus attired, he rows ashore in his gig, walks up to the "office"—*i.e.* his ship's agents, who, when business is completed, invite him to remain and have lunch. He says "he don't mind if he do"; and after enjoying the meal, and making himself agreeable in his honest, sailor-like fashion, he sallies forth—to do a little shopping and have a look round. You will recognise him by his prodigious hat, half in, half out of some little native Europe-shop in the "China" or "Sudder" Bazaar, bargaining for this, that, and the other; stuffing some of his purchases into his capacious pockets, some in the cavernous depths of that preposterous hat. Later on, at night, you may find him in some

billiard saloon, knocking the balls about with a brother-salt to the accompaniment of Bass, rum-and-water, or whisky-and-soda ; but though a bit hilarious on such occasions, he seldom gets "half-seas over" : and further, being a family man, with a "wife" and perhaps half a dozen children in the old country, he steers clear of certain other allurements which are easily available.

He is a splendid fellow as a rule, from the super-Dreadnought "toff" to the smoke-stack "shell-back" ; and in praise of him—whether on the quarter-deck or in fo'c'sle—we will end up this chapter in the words of a poetaster (if you like to call him so) who says—

" There's not a chap who'll sell his soul  
So readily, so steadily,  
To pull his country from a hole  
As England's Sailor Handy-man."

## CHAPTER III

### THE COVENANTED CIVILIAN

HE belongs to what less-favoured mortals style "The Heaven-born"—and with reason; for while you or I write our monthly rupee salaries in three figures, he—with perhaps not half our length of service—employs four. True, the Covenanted Civilian's responsibilities may be heavier than those of the soldier—in time of peace—and those of the many varieties of the Uncovenanted Civilian, at whom we will glance in the next chapter; but his duties incur a minimum of outdoor hardship, and unless he is given to *shikarring*, he undergoes very little exposure. It has therefore always been a burning question whether he of the *crème de la crème* gives Government as much moil and toil in return for his handsome salary as the others put in for their far more modest emoluments. Another thing: look at the difference both in the chances of advancement and the ultimate pensions. The Covenanted Civilian, the envied I.C.S. man, can climb to Member of Council, Commissioner, Provincial Lieutenant-Governor, and peradventure to Governor. If he retires, say, only as a District Collector and Magistrate or Sessions Judge, he falls back on something like a pension of £1000 per annum. In comparison with such golden prospects, what has the soldier and Uncovenanted Civilian to hope for? We leave the reader—acquainted with India—to answer the query.

Cracknell is a full-blown Collector and Magistrate, the supreme head of the District, and local representative of Government. His monthly official income all told exceeds three thousand rupees. He occupies the finest house in the station—called “The Collectorate,” and always reserved for whoever holds his appointment. Indeed, the place would go begging and fall into ruin otherwise; for the big man on his part would not condescend to an ordinary bungalow, while no one else could or would aspire to taking “The Collectorate” on its huge rental. The Collector, though, is in a measure obliged to keep up a certain state: the natives would condemn any *Budda Sahib* (high official) of his calibre who neglected to invest himself with a halo of pomp and circumstance. Besides this, his house must contain many spare suites of guest-rooms; for whenever anyone of consequence—from the Governor down to a brother-civilian—visits the station, the Collector thinks himself bound to take him in. All smaller fry have either to tent it, refuge in the European rest-house, or depend on the hospitality of one of the minor residents. Cracknell and his wife are most particular on this matter: they are open-handed people, but especially delight in welcoming to their portals the great and eminent. Once, when no less a personage than the Commander-in-Chief came round on a tour of inspection, the local Brigadier, accompanied by his staff, went to meet the famous soldier at the railway station, and thence escort him to the Brigadier’s residence, which had been swept and garnished for the purpose. Much to the surprise of the fighting-men, however, Cracknell at the last moment appeared on the

platform, introduced himself, and when the guard of honour had been looked at, calmly drove away with the Chief in his carriage-and-pair. Then, on another occasion the Bishop was expected on a pastoral visitation; and, naturally enough, the Rev. Theobald Jannes, the station Chaplain, on five hundred rupees a month, and his young wife felt it incumbent upon them to receive and entertain the prelate during the period of his sojourn. This would be the Jannes' first experience of the kind, and wild was the excitement that Mrs. Jannes was thrown into at the idea. Of course, no one else thought of offering to house the Bishop; it being quite *comme il faut* that the Chaplain should do so. Mrs. Jannes flew hither and thither in her pony-dogcart among her lady-friends, borrowing sheets and pillow-slips from one, some custard-glasses from another,—for she would have to invite the whole station in batches to dinner in honour of her right reverend guest,—and she almost went down on her knees to Captain Jakes, regimental mess secretary, when asking him for the loan of one of his mess cooks, as her own poorly paid *chef* possessed a very hazy knowledge of his art, and she could not procure an efficient man in the bazaar. At last, after an infinity of tribulation, she had everything ready, and, attired in her best, she accompanied the Chaplain to the railway station to welcome the great Churchman and conduct him to the Parsonage. The Bishop came, and had barely shaken hands with the Jannes when Cracknell strolled in, introduced himself, and without as much as saying “By your leave” or “By your licence,” calmly walked off with that pillar of the Church! Imagine the surprise—perhaps relief—of the Jannes!

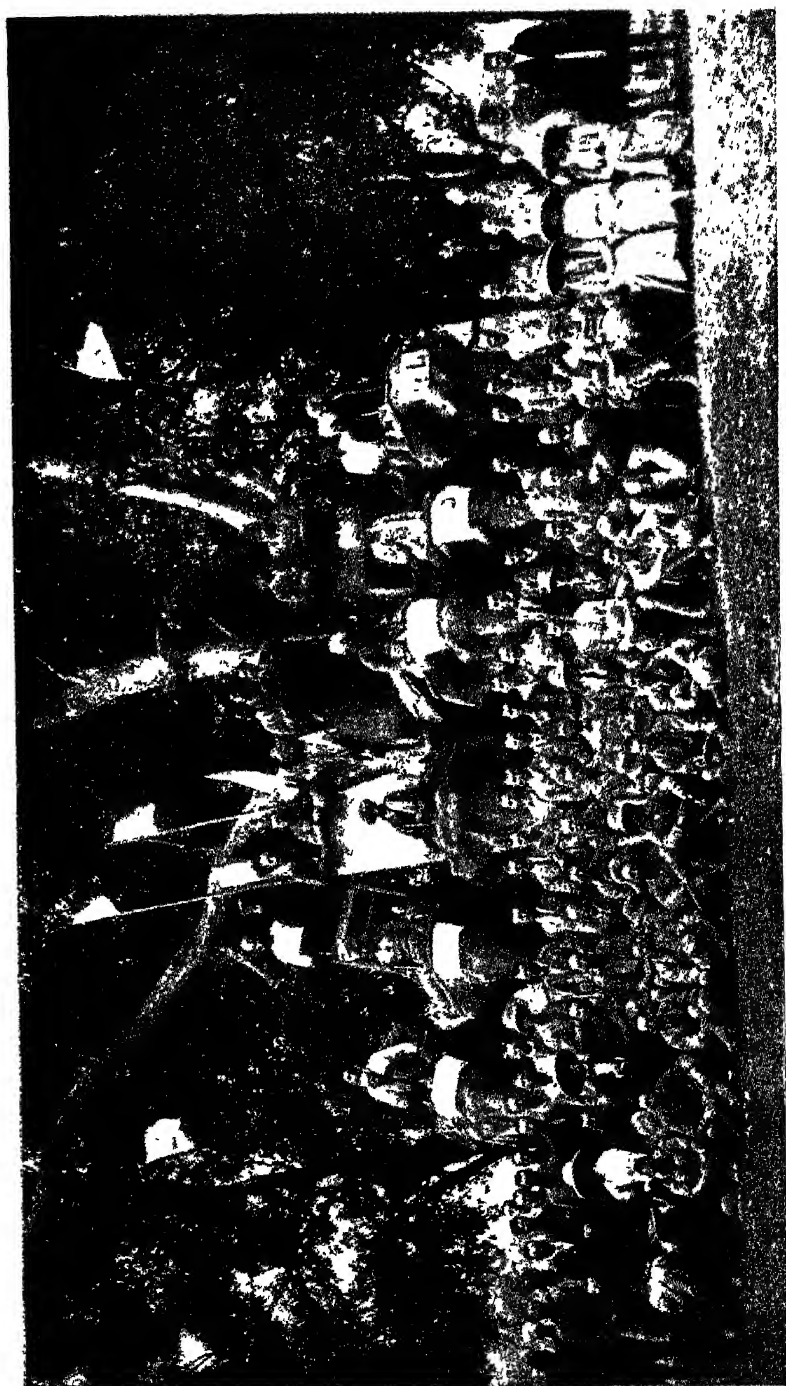
Though Cracknell has a predilection for the high and mighty ones of the earth, he is not unmindful of his humbler fellow-exotics—those who sit above the salt, that is ; for unless you are a *sahib* (gentleman of gentle birth), he will have nothing—socially—to do with you, “gazetted officer” though you may be. Periodically, Mrs. Cracknell sends out invitations for a dinner, which the bidden ones are in a manner obliged to attend. At less important spreads, hosts and guests do not trouble themselves much as to who takes in who, the question being very often solved by a general scramble. But Cracknell is a stickler for precedence ; so, when dinner is announced, he “gives a sign” to McCasser, the Assistant Collector, a budding replica of himself, who goes round apportioning each to each in strict accordance with status, etc. ; which done, Cracknell makes for the senior lady, and marches her off at the head of the procession.

For all his swagger and self-assumed superiority, Cracknell is not half a bad fellow ; the milk of human loving-kindness lurks in him. He subscribes liberally to anything that may be going—from re-turfing the cricket-pitch to supplying the station church with a new reredos. He has also proved himself a friend in need ; a notable instance being that when Gnaggs—the Assistant Police Officer—a bit of a favourite with Mrs. Cracknell, because he sings duets with her, and praises her eyes—fell into some financial difficulty and wanted five hundred rupees to save him from hot water, Cracknell, hearing of it, sent the young chap a cheque for the amount, and subsequently would not see Gnaggs’ repayment of a hundred rupees on account, when that youth carried the sum over in a bag.

Though staid and reserved, as he deems compatible with his position; though he always discountenances ribaldry or aught approaching the *risqué* and equivocal, Cracknell possesses a sense of humour, and can show it, even when "he hadn't ought to." Being lay trustee of the station church, he reads the evening Sunday service and a sermon from a book when the Rev. Mr. Jannes goes to conduct public worship at outlying substations in the vicinity. Well, one day, while Cracknell occupied the pulpit, Mr. Jannes' pet monkey got loose from the contiguous Parsonage, and came cantering across to the church—evidently in search of his master. At the time of the incident it happened that the church had just been overhauled, and among other renovations the interior woodwork varnished. Immediately below the pulpit was the clerk's stall, and by it the font containing a marble basin—empty just now, and surmounted by a dome-shaped hinged wooden cover. This cover had also been varnished on both sides, and, to allow of it drying, stood open. Well, when Trump, the monkey, came leaping up the aisle, not seeing his master he made straight for his old friend the Eurasian clerk, sprang on to his shoulder, and—after the manner of his kind—began rummaging the old fellow's hair; whereupon the clerk, scandalised by this unseemly interruption, grabbed the simian by the nape of the neck, and promptly popping the brute into the font, banged down the cover on him. People were in smothered fits, but when they saw that Cracknell wore a broad grin on his face, all restraint and decorum broke down, and the whole congregation—joined by Cracknell—howled with laughter.







COMPETITORS AT THE KADIR CUP MEETING.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE UNCOVENANTED CIVILIAN

OCTOPUS-LIKE, the Uncovenanted Civil Service extends its suckers over many departments, among the chief of which may be named the Public Works or Engineering, the Telegraph, the Forest, and the Postal. Very few Uncovenanted berths carry big salaries with them, even for those on the upper rungs of the ladder; while the vast majority bring in something the reverse of princely. All the Uncovenanted departments—the Postal perhaps excepted—require technically and highly educated men to run them: men who have to undergo expensive home-training, and obtain their nominations only after successfully passing competitive examinations. So, when comparing their lot with that of the Covenanted Civilian, scholar though he undoubtedly is in his own way, the anomaly forcibly strikes the thinker.

Taken all in all, the U.C.S., or Uncovenanted Civil Servant, is not behind the "Heaven-born" in point of birth and breeding; but he does not attempt to *behauder* ("boss") it over his fellows, even inoffensively—as Cracknell, for instance, does. Every one of them has his nose kept to the grindstone, especially during the outdoor working season—*i.e.* from October to March; while for the rest of the year—passed more under shelter at headquarters—he is nevertheless full up with indoor work, punctuated by periodical inspections of

outlying subordinate offices, projects, ranges, and so forth. There are occasional exceptions, an instance of which I hope to show in a later chapter.

Another singularity is illustrated in the "Language Rules" affecting the two Services. Proficiency in one or more vernacular is compulsory with the Covenanted Man. As regards the Uncovenanted, we can speak with certainty only of the Telegraph Department, which does not—or, at least, did not—insist on its officers passing the "lingoes": they could do so if they pleased. But whereas a "language pass" would mean a step or an increase of pay to others, it brought no such benefit to the *Tarr-wallah* (Telegraph Man) beyond his securing the prescribed *moonshee* (native teacher) allowance, by courtesy styled "Government Reward." Take Hindustani, for example: the honorarium payable to the Telegraph Officer in passing this language was—and perhaps is—Rs. 180 for the lower standard, and Rs. 360 for the higher: sums which purported to cover the teacher's pay, and leave a little something over for the student. The consequences were that very few Telegraph Men troubled themselves on the subject; and the following story is told of one of the exceptions:—

Soon after his arrival in the country, young P——, in a fit of mental aberration, started studying Hindustani, and when ready, officially applied to be examined—in the lower standard. Accordingly, a day was appointed, and P—— received instructions to appear before "The Board of Examiners for Uncovenanted Assistants" at the Presidency—a long journey by road and rail, which the candidate undertook on "Examina-

tion Leave," and of course at his own expense. Well, he presented himself—smiling and confident; for he possessed ample means, so the situation had no terrors for him. The Board—all passed Hindustani men themselves—regarded P—— rather as a curiosity, for he happened to be the first Telegraphist any of them had ever dealt with. P—— went through the test easily, and when all was over, the President, after complimenting him, said, "But may I ask what has induced you to take up a language—for I believe you gain nothing by passing?"

"A hundred and eighty rupees," replied P——, without moving a muscle.

"Yes, yes; we know that is all you get from Government. But what is your ulterior motive?"

"A hundred and eighty rupees," repeated P——.

"Hang the hundred and eighty rupees!" exclaimed a member. "Surely you expect some benefit! And as your Department gives none, you must have something in your eye. What is it?"

"A hundred and eighty rupees," persisted the candidate, beginning to feel impatient.

This set the whole Board laughing, and then another member put in, "But look here, you don't mean to tell us that you have been mugging at Hindustani without something substantial in view? And now that you've passed, what do you expect to get?"

"A hundred and eighty rupees!" thundered P——, becoming nettled by all this questioning. "And I tell you what, if you *dik* (bother) me much more, I shall think you fellows *larlooch* (covet) the beggarly hundred and eighty rupees; so

if you don't shut up, I shall, when I finger the money, come here again and give you a scramble with the coin instead of paying my *moonshee* ! ”

You encounter the Uncovenanted drudge everywhere, in all sorts of odd corners and situations, for he is far more numerous than his Covenanted contemporary. Travelling by train, you slow down, say, at a bridge under repair. You look out of window—to see what is going on ; when in the dry river-bed, amid a swarm of native workmen, you behold Pincheson, the State Railway Engineer, in a big sun-hat, “ a mud-coloured khaki suit, with trousers inside his top-boots so wide, and sucking a longish cheroot.” You know Pincheson ; you wave wildly at him. He spots you, and immediately starts hallooing and signing to you to get out at the flag station beyond the river. Without comprehending the real gist of these antics, you shake your head ; the train goes on, and it is not until she has left the flag station behind that you realise the cause of your friend's gesticulations, for there, in a shady *tope* (grove) of tamarind, close to the line, stand several tents, while, seated at the raised door of one, Mrs. Pincheson and her sister, who with the Engineer himself would have been jolly glad of your company, with all the news of the outside world, for they have been vegetating in that *tope* perhaps over a month. Think of it : two Christian gentlewomen—not to speak of the man—doomed to spend weeks a hundred miles from their bungalow in the station, and a good three or four hundred miles from the nearest Europe-shop window ! And yet a month or so before, or in a month or so to come, those ladies were or will be doing Bond Street !

You are voyaging down a canal in a cabin boat : you occupy the comfortable fore-cabin, reading or doing office work, when you hear a murmuring of voices. You look out—to ascertain the cause ; and see Copperas of the Telegraphs doing something to the wires which follow the canal bank. You know Copperas too, poor chap ! He is leagues away from the next halting-stage ; it is ten o'clock, and he cannot possibly get into camp before the late afternoon, as he is repairing the line, and his rate of progression is correspondingly slow. You are about having breakfast, so you tell them to steer inshore, and you shout to Copperas to come on board and refresh. Nothing loath, he accepts your invite, and you keep him with you as long as possible.

Feeling a little “run down,” you get a few days’ leave, and determine to go after tiger—for, look you ! a fair friend wants a skin for her dogcart, and you deem yourself called upon to gratify her wish. You meet Jungleigh, the Forest Officer, at the mess one night, he having come into headquarters for a space ; and you mention the subject to him—as the most likely to help you. Grinning appreciatively, he at once tumbles to it, names a certain locality in his range where—as luck would have it—his rangers have just reported a tiger ; that there is a “Forest Bungalow” in the vicinity, and that if you care to go and rough it, you are welcome to occupy the house for as long as you wish ; but that unfortunately—much as he would enjoy it—he cannot be round to do the honours, but will send instructions to the bungalow *choukidar*, or man in charge, to attend on you. You thank Jungleigh, and after ascertaining how long

the journey will take, you name the date of your proposed visit. Now, Jungleigh had hinted nothing to lead you to expect much more than the shelter of four walls and the use of a stick or two of camp furniture; for the Forest Officer—while badly paid—is supposed to rub along with a minimum of the good things of this life. So, when you reach Jungleigh's jungle bungalow, you are considerably, pleasantly surprised to find everything you want—several smiling servants to wait upon you, the breakfast-table laid, a man at the *punkah*-rope; while, above all, tethered at the back, a great tusker elephant, and a number of natives squatted round!

“What's the elephant for?” you ask, astonished.

“Por (for) your honour soot (to shoot) tiger, sar,” replies Jungleigh's head-boy. “He Porris yellpunt (Forest departmental elephant). My master ardring (ordered) to come here por your honour *eujjing* (use).”

“Well—I'm—jiggered!” you mutter. “What a brick! And those men?”

“Jungle pipplis (people), sar. My master telling to come here por beaters.” Then—to your joy—adding: “Your honour wassing (will bathe) 'pore bekkiss (before breakfast), sar?”

“Oh yes. I'm hot and dusty.”

“Hat or kole (hot or cold) water, sar?”

Think of such a luxury as a hot-water bath out there! Good old Jungleigh—to prepare such a reception for you! From that day, when you hear folks commiserating with him on his lonely life and hard lot, you grin, but say nothing.



## CHAPTER V

### THE MEDICAL MAN

HERE we get to what most of us look on as the noblest, the most indispensable of professions; for how would our exiles fare without "The Doctor" in that home of cholera, dysentery, fever, plague, sun-stroke, snake-bite, and many other minor ills to which exotic flesh is heir to out yonder? In India the physician is by no means so plentiful as he is here, where in a single street or road—whether in Mayfair or Suburbia—several brass plates and red lamps give you the comforting assurance that medical aid lies within a stone's-throw of your door; while in the shop-quarter round the corner chemists are open to supply you with medicaments at all hours of the day and night. Out there, in our scattered, far-reaching cantonments, doctors—for the general public, that is—are not so get-at-able; and in the absence of the English chemist, to be found only in the largest places, you have to rely for your remedies upon the Government dispensary or hospital—perhaps miles away.

The profession may be divided into three branches: the R.A.M.C., or Royal Army Medical Corps; the I.M.S., or Indian Medical Service; and—in some of the bigger stations—the private practitioner. The first are generally attached to British regiments and the Staff; while the second are in charge of native corps, and hold independent

civil surgeoncies throughout the country. There are some "plums" within reach of the Medical Man, notably the posts of "Residency Surgeons" and "Durbar Physicians"—the former where there is a Government representative at a Native Court ; the latter a species of honorary title and appointment in connection with the Native Court itself. Both Services are now given military rank : there are no such persons as " Dr." Snooks or " Surgeon " Bodgers ; they are styled " Colonel " or " Major " Snooks, and " Captain " or " Lieutenant " Bodgers. The private practitioners—working independently—are to be met with at the more important centres : the three Presidency cities, Poonah, Allahabad, Bangalore, Secunderabad, etc. ; also at hill stations such as Simla, Mussoorie, Ootacamund, and Kodai-kanal.

The Regimental Medico has nothing professional to do outside his immediate charge beyond sitting on Boards, Committees, consultations, and so forth. Our Civil Surgeon is the one who is more in touch with the non-military and general public. He is a "warm" man, is Captain Akny ; for although obliged by the rules to give his services gratis to Government officials, he can charge for attendance on their families : but with regard to all non-officials—the Europe-shop folks, merchants, contractors, mill employés, etc.—he has a prescriptive title to charge them what he likes at so much per visit. If payments are fairly prompt, all goes well ; but should any considerable delay arise, there is probably a row. Rupees are not nearly so abundant in India now as formerly, and Akny's private patients occasionally get behindhand with their settlements, in spite of the maxim inculcating

the advisability of keeping on good terms with your doctor. In these instances, Akny and men of his type exercise patience ; the more so when they see that the shoe really pinches, and it is not owing to hanky-panky on the part of the man or his wife that the money is not forthcoming. Indeed, Akny has been known to abandon his claim altogether in cases of genuine distress. But there are others who go the reverse way about. These do not hesitate in putting on the screw, and making the wretched defaulter stump up, even if he has to borrow, or pawn his watch for the purpose.

What with his Government salary and the fruits of his extensive private practice, which his skill and good-heartedness have helped him to build up, Akny, we say, is a "warm" man ; more than comfortably well off, and with a cosy nest-egg in the hands of his agents. He is married, has a young family, tenants a nice bungalow in a good part of the cantonment ; and besides a couple of horses and a dogcart, he has lately invested—by importation from home—in a sort of motor-car, a "knock-about," he calls it, which whirls him to his hospital and his patients in the mornings or during the day, while in the evening it takes him to mess or wherever he may have to go. We are not very well up on the subject of motor-cars, though there are many in the station ; but we know that Akny's machine can give points to the rest in respect to noise. You are aware of his movements by the humming, throbbing pulsations in the air, which intensify as he approaches, culminating into an ear-splitting racket as he whizzes past you. Then, supposing he is visiting your house, he swishes in through the gate, enhaloed

in dust, to the accompaniment of an "infernal" din, and brings up with a jerk under your porch, where his machine at once starts a measured plunk-plunk-plunk, which it keeps up the whole time it is there. Of course, you are out on the steps to meet your friend. You exchange nods; for in that turmoil speech is futile till he enters the house. When he leaves, you go to see him off: but before starting, he frantically revolves a wheel, or something that protrudes at right angles in front; the plunk-plunk grows louder; he jumps in, clicks this, jams over that, pulls towards him another, and, amid a conglomeration of uncanny sounds, sweeps out of the gate in a twinkling. To add to it all, some American commercial traveller visited the station the other day with an assortment of "notions," among them some "improved motor-hoots." But though the "cousin" blarneyed his best, none of the local automobilists except Akny purchased one of these novelties—a contrivance that proved to beat creation in the hideousness of its yap, suggesting a cross between the burbling of an angry buck-camel when being loaded, and the combined outgrabbings of a bag of wild cats. The natives speak of all motor-cars as *Pishash vundee*, or 'devils' carts; but Akny's they have christened *Periah Pishash vundee*, or the Prince of the Devils' cart.

The Medical Man's lot in India—that land of distances—is no sinecure, especially if he is held in repute, with an extensive practice, and heart in the right place—as it is with our friend. At any moment, without the slightest warning, he may be called to places five or even ten miles away, where, say, a D.P.W. officer or subordinate

has fallen off a bridge pier, and been so seriously injured as to prevent his being carried into the cantonment. Akny, on the summons, promptly gets into his motor, provided with all necessaries, and arrives on the scene in half an hour or so, does the needful, and probably returns—with his patient comfortably disposed in the back seat of the car. Akny is honorary member of one of the regimental messes. After dinner, he is in the billiard-room—having a hundred-up with another player. A native rushes in with a “chit” marked “urgent,” and hands it to Akny. He peruses it, puts down his cue, and remarking that he hopes to be back soon, to finish the game, goes out, wrestles with his motor, hops in, and is off. In a few minutes he returns, hangs up his cap, and resumes his cue.

“Well, what’s the row, Akny?” queries a looker-on.

“Oh, only Mrs. Chiselhurst,” he replies calmly. “Let’s see—it’s my stroke, I think.”

“Is she ill?” asks someone else.

“No. Her baby boy awoke with a start and began crying, which frightened the mother, who thought the child was in for convulsions, so she sent for me.”

“A false alarm, eh?”

“Er—yes.”

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHURCHMAN

IN the first-class brigade cantonment, where we now take our stand, there are many places of Christian public worship—five Church of England, several Roman Catholic, including a cathedral and a number of minor tabernacles for Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, all with a following of native converts, while the Presbyterians boast of a fine kirk to themselves—maintained by Government, owing to the number of Scotsmen among the soldiery—horse, foot, and artillery. Indeed, should a Highland regiment be in garrison, the kirk can scarcely accommodate the congregation, as most of the “chields” profess Presbyterianism. When the men are paraded for divine service, they sort into parties according to their respective leanings, and are marched off to their places of worship; the bulk—those of the Established Faith—being distributed among the five churches of England.

It stands to reason, with such a large force of whites, irrespective of native corps, supplemented by many civilians and a considerable non-official European population, that the cleric of sorts is no *rara avis* in the station; but to deal with a specimen of each would be beyond our scope, so let us glance at one of the “English *Padres*,” the Rev. Horace Wandle, senior Chaplain, drawing Rs. 800 a month, married, and just now a grass-widower. Mr. Wandle is a thoroughly excellent

man ; while a faithful servant of a Heavenly Master, zealous of good works, charitable and kind, his views are broad and non-ascetic. He does not make religion a burden to himself, nor does he desire his disciples to do so ; he thinks that the clergy are free to participate in the good things of this life without jeopardising the blessings awaiting them in the hereafter, and that there is no call for them to set the laity an example by perennially wearing long faces and eschewing the sinless pleasures sent by Providence for our delectation. As honorary member, he frequently dines at mess, where his presence has no damping effect ; the company merely exercising a little discretion over their lips by abstaining from anything of the racy or pungent order. His reverence possesses a magnificent baritone voice which—in addition to his general amiability and sound common sense—makes him a *persona grata* among dinner-giving hostesses. Here, as well as at any other social gathering, he lays himself out to be agreeable, and makes no sign beyond perhaps becoming a little grave should aught be said that had best been left unsaid ; and, unlike others of his cloth, who turn away in horror from the sight, Mr. Wandle regards with calm equanimity the spectacle of beauty more unadorned than adorned. Except for giving the lady concerned one reproving glance, he takes no further notice : the contemplation of plump shoulders and snowy arms are not in his line. If the audacious fair one happens to be a member of his congregation, and he otherwise thinks well of her, he may possibly call on the lady, and in kindly language point out the error of her ways ; but as for anathematising her, not he !

Mr. Wandle is quite aware that brevity is the very essence of a sermon as it is the soul of wit. He has spent many years in "India's sultry clime," and knows full well that his hearers, however devout, are but human; that, subject as they are to the soporific effects of the *punkah*, they find it hard work to keep awake if the discourse much exceeds the proverbial ten minutes; so he limits himself to that period, with happy results.

The military forming the bulk of his fold, Mr. Wandle comes much in contact with the soldier. He frequently visits the barracks, where he is immensely popular; the Tommies' dictum being that "'E ain't wan o' them snivellin' blokes as thrittens yer with 'Ell an' damnation whenever 'e comes along."

Be this as it may; liking the Tommies, and being liked by them in turn, the good *Padre* is not blind to their faults—indeed, he is very alive to them. You cannot persuade Mr. Wandle into the belief that of all irreligious mortals on this earth the British soldier—intrinsically—does not head the list; and in connection with this conviction of his, the following story is told about the excellent man.

While holding his last chaplaincy—also at a large military station—among his flock was a major of British infantry named Keynsham, one of those few ardent Christians who preach to the men. He would delight in describing how they welcomed him, and devoutly gave ear to his exhortations; dwelling on these statements whenever he and Mr. Wandle discussed the subject. The Chaplain invariably pooh-poohed the Major's ideas as hallucinations, averring that the men were attentive only because Keynsham was one



of their officers, and so forth. These arguments would occasionally develop into downright wrangles, which, however, the disputants soon patched up.

One day Keynsham called in on the *Padre* and said, "I think I can convince you now! Yesterday morning I went on foot to parade along that path with the hedge skirting the barracks. It had hardly dawned, but through the hedge I made out two white objects on the grass, and heard a voice constantly repeating the words, 'My sins are ever before me.'"

"Humph! Who was he?" asked Mr. Wandle.

"One of the men—though I could not identify him in that dim light. He was evidently trying to impress a comrade with the significance of the sentence."

"Very interesting," remarked the clergyman pithily. "I should like to witness the performance myself."

"That is why I have come to you. I saw and heard the same thing this morning. Knowing the Colonel to hold your views, I told him, and, like you, he wants to see for himself; so he is coming over to my house before dawn to-morrow morning—to accompany me. Will you join us?"

"Certainly! I'll be ready."

Accordingly, early next morning, Keynsham, the Colonel, and the Chaplain walked softly along the boundary hedge, and—sure enough—beheld the two white objects as described by the Major. They halted, listened, and heard a voice repeating the same words with a fervour there was no mistaking.

"Now, what do you think?" demanded Keynsham in a triumphant *sotto voce*. "Are you not both wrong?"

"No doubt of that—in this instance," replied the Colonel frankly.

"I should like to interview him, though," remarked Mr. Wandle.

"Call out to him, then," suggested the Major.

"My friend," commenced the *Padre*, peering over the hedge,—"*ei*—I am the Chaplain, and am truly glad to find you thus early at your devotions."

"Ay!" added the Colonel. "Who are you?"

"Private N——, B Company, on sick absence, sir," replied one of the men, recognising the voice of his C.O. and springing to attention, though the other fellow did not stir.

"Ah! And your comrade who is joining in your prayers?" inquired the *Padre* blandly.

"'E weren't a-joinin' me, sir."

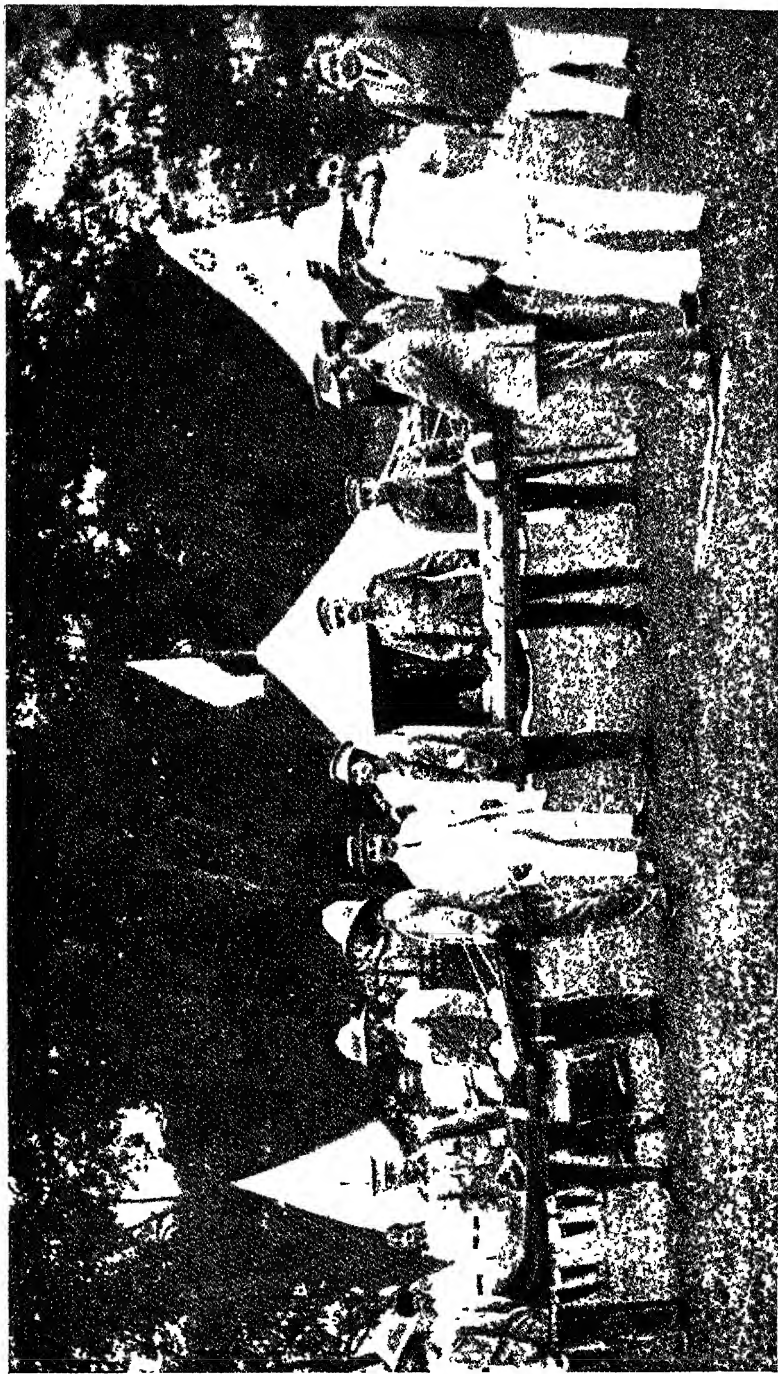
"Well, he was reaping the benefit of listening to you, nevertheless," continued his reverence. "But tell us, what has moved you to this admirable frame of mind?"

"Nothin' as I knows of, sir: I was only learnin' Joe there to sye a few decent words."

"Why does Joe remain huddled up? I conclude that Joe is your comrade?"

Private N—— hereupon sniggered audibly, and answered, "Well, sir, 'e is my kumrid in a manner of speakin': 'e's in 'is kyge—with a white kivver a-top of it. 'E's my poll parrot, an' I'm a-tryin' to teach 'im some decent words, so as to sell 'im; 'cos none of the lydies won't buy wan of them cussin' birds, sir."

After that, when Keynsham said anything in support of soldierly godliness in the hearing of Mr. Wandle, the latter would always silence him by crying, "Remember the poll parrot, Major!"



AN AMBULANCE DEMONSTRATION—CALCUTTA 1ST DIVISION.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE MERCHANT

You seldom find the "Gentleman" Merchant inland. He is established on the coast where ships come and coasting steamers call, affording outlets for his goods. Of course, at Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Kurrachee he is in force, a power to be reckoned with. He chiefly exports crude country produce, such as tea, coffee, jute, cotton, indigo, etc. ; while he may import spirits, Manchester stuffs, Sheffield cutlery, and "Brummagem" guns, the last principally for the natives.

By "Gentleman" Merchant we mean the man of business who is received by the local Society, perhaps consisting of a dozen souls all told. But to achieve this he frequently has an uphill game to play, for the bureaucratic element preponderates, and the feminine portion thereof is dead against admitting to their exclusive circle anyone who smacks of the shop or counter. If the Merchant has no such taint, he gets in ; but to the pretender it is a well-nigh impossibility, because if his speech betrays him, or sundry mannerisms proclaim him to be what he really is, he may whistle for admission.

When Daillyer, of Primrose & Daillyer Ltd., London, first came as a bachelor to Durriabunder, to start an Indian branch of his firm, he found the little exotie community—a mere handful of the usual Government civilians, with a few women

thrown in—stand-offish in the extreme. Ere he had time to drop cards on them, Gargoil,—the chief resident,—urged by his wife, made an informal “feeler” call on Daillyer, when, finding that he spoke with a suspicion of twang, the discovery at once damned the newcomer, so that when he paid his visits shortly after, it was a case of “Not at home” everywhere, Mrs. Gargoil having decided that Daillyer should not be allowed within the pale; and none of the smaller fry dared to dispute that lady’s dictum. This because he was of the “Trading classes,” whereas, had he been a gazetted Government Officer, and sported an accent you could cut with a knife, ’twould not have militated against him. Consequently, Daillyer, being of a social disposition, fell back on the companionship of the two Scotch mill engineers, the D.P.W. Overseer, and Port Officer—with their better-halves; worthy folks, but *not sahibs* (gentle-people). For a while he chafed under the snubbing that had been dealt him, but eventually the rankle toned down, and he made the best of it with the associates above named, who had received him gladly.

After a successful two years in Durriabunder, Daillyer ran home on short leave, married, and brought his bride out with him—a remarkably pretty, go-ahead, and ambitious young person, who quitted the music-hall stage to wed the Merchant, having taken care to ascertain beforehand that he had plenty of money, was building up a big business, and bid fair to become a merchant prince at no distant date. Mrs. Daillyer had embarked on a new career to “better” herself: she had married a monied man out of and above her sphere

—to ascend a step in the social ladder ; so, when Daillyer acquainted her with the existing state of affairs at Durriabunder, she made up her mind not to be sat upon. She determined to work her way into that mystic circle called Society by hook or by crook. Immediately on arrival at her new home, the mill men, the Overseer, and the Port Officer, with their “missuses,” paid their respects ; but Mrs. Daillyer would have none of them, and instead set herself to make for those of the local “Upper Ten.”

Parenthetically be it said that the Durriabunderites had been vegetating there for some years, far removed from civilisation,—in the light we take it,—and the gentler sex, besides being badly behind the fashions, were not particularly blessed with those gifts of Nature so prized by every daughter of Eve.

A few days afterwards, when Mrs. Daillyer appeared on the little sea-front, the evening rendezvous, she at once became the cynosure of all eyes. The men admired her good looks, while the women were more struck with her clothes, especially her skirt, the latest home vogue, and consequently a novelty of absorbing interest. That night there was a dinner-party at the Gargoils', where Mrs. Daillyer constituted the main topic of conversation. Some of the men were for casting prejudice aside, and admitting “the Merchant people” to their coterie ; but though the Gargoils overruled the idea, Mrs. G. was not above attempting to get at that skirt—to copy. When the men went out to smoke, she discussed the matter with her lady friends, all equally eager for the venture. Various suggestions were put forward, but as

none proved practicable, Mrs. Gargoil said she would go to "the woman" and ask her point-blank for the loan of the skirt—as a model; a creature of that sort would feel only too flattered. She went on the morrow, and really, rather to her surprise, Mrs. Daillyer granted the request. Bringing the garment home in triumph, word was sent round. The other ladies flocked over—each with her tailor; and a sanhedrim of "snips" sat on that skirt. They fathomed the secret of cut, make, draping; and in a few days every *mem sahib* (lady) in the place was adorned with a replica. Thus had "the woman" inserted the thin end of her wedge. The ladies now vouchsafed a half-nod to Mrs. Daillyer when passing her, and the men sheepishly doffed their hats; to which somewhat qualified recognitions the "Merchant people" responded pleasantly. But no more: that wedge wanted further driving; and the means came to hand when one morning about a week later, to the intense surprise of Durriabunder, a cable steamer of the Royal Indian Marine put into the bay with damaged engines. Everyone hastened to the jetty, where the old Port Officer, who had already exchanged signals with the vessel, told them that she might stay two or three days—to allow of the repairs being effected in smooth water. Later on, after having visited the ship, the Port Officer informed Gargoil that her Captain and a party would be coming ashore on the morrow! Eureka! excitement, a possible opening for a spurt of mild high-jinks, and an opportunity for airing the new skirts! So the Port Officer was instructed to tell the ship people that they would be welcome. But where were they to shelter? There was no hotel or rest-



house, while the residents had no spare rooms. Gargoil met the difficulty by having his tents pitched on the police parade ground. Then about giving them a feed: they must be fed, for the R.I.M. was but a step removed from the R.N. So Mrs. Gargoil would invite them to dinner, for her drawing and dining rooms could accommodate the expected guests, besides the local folks, who would all be bidden. Thus far—good. The Captain, with several others, landed next morning; all were down to meet them: they expressed themselves very grateful for their hospitable reception, and accepted Mrs. Gargoil's invitation to dinner that evening. But now came the crux of the whole situation—how to entertain the strangers? There was not a piano, not so much as a bagatelle board, in Durriabunder; cards would be too slow, while ordinary "talkee-talkee" might send them to sleep. The residents were in despair; and all were at the Gargoi's, trying to think it out, when a man—one of their number—came in and said that as he passed Daillyer's bungalow on his way home from office he heard the tinkle of a piano and a powerful contralto accompaniment. So, the big case they had seen landed from the coasting steamer from Bombay a day or two previous must have been a piano for "that woman"! Putting on her sun-hat, Mrs. Gargoil rushed across to the "Merchant people's," and there she abjectly begged the hitherto despised "woman" to help them out of their dilemma. Would the Daillyers come to dinner? and would she kindly lend her piano for the occasion? "The woman" agreed "like a shot," for she saw her chance. The piano was carried across. Evening

closed in ; the guests assembled ; the marine contingent arrived ; and Mrs. Daillyer—the centre of attraction, especially to the sailors, who had not seen her during the day—made herself the life of the dinner-table, and afterwards presiding at the piano, she charmed the whole assembly with a succession of the newest comics, that had hitherto been unheard “on India’s coral strand.” The next day, all Durriabunder called on “The Merchant Woman,” who thus, with a little diplomacy and fortuity, gained her end.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PRESSMAN

THERE are giants of the Press in India as well as elsewhere. We have also our "gutter-press," chiefly Anglo-vernacular productions, run by so-called educated, Europeanised natives, who, for all their education and Europeanisation, are—with some bright exceptions—malcontents at heart, and use their organs as mediums of attack on the paramount power. The tone of the purely vernacular publications we dare not allude to. Leaving the two latter alone, the following may be mentioned as the front-rank papers of British India: the *Pioneer* of Allahabad, the *Englishman* of Calcutta, the *Times of India* and *Gazette* of Bombay, the *Mail* and *Times* of Madras. These, together with many other minor news-sheets of good repute, are published in various parts of the Peninsula, owned and edited by Europeans or Eurasians. Newspaper prices rule higher out there than at home, costing in annas what we pay in halfpence here. The local issue is delivered at your door; that from up-country reaches the subscriber by post.

Let us take for our representative Pressman the Editor and Proprietor of an average *mofussil* daily. It commands a circulation of, say, five thousand, for it does not make a speciality of catering for the Anglicised native preponderance; nor does it profess any particular political views, beyond a loyalty to Government.

A recent frontier campaign had just closed, war correspondents dispersed, and one of them, Edward Bexley, who, employed by a home paper, had been at the front, not caring to return to drudgery by renewing his contract, found himself at Choolaypore, whither he had gravitated in quest of a locality suitable for starting a paper of his own ; for he was without encumbrances, and, being a careful fellow, had scraped together sufficient money for the venture. The larger stations he had already explored gave no room for him, so at last finding the field open at Choolaypore, he decided on that place, where his preliminary prospectus was favourably received, and numbers—both in cantonment and district—promised him their support. Choolaypore itself is a salubrious location, possessing all the advantages of climate and surroundings which make life worth living in “The Land of Regrets.” There is a big brigade, together with a substantial contingent of black coats, and many other Europeans of sorts and conditions.

The *Ariel* became an immediate success, and though at first it exhibited many vacant spaces in the advertising columns, these gradually filled ; subscribers increased rapidly, and the circulation extended through the post to other stations, even to the Presidency city itself.

Bexley being of a studious, particularly retiring, and sensitive disposition, had not attempted to join in the Society of the station, although quite fitted for it in every respect. But he was no green-horn ; he knew India ; he knew the exclusiveness of her exotic *haut monde*, who would look down on a mere newspaper man. To avoid risking any

such rebuff, he made no acquaintances beyond certain Government officials who had to be approached on the subject of his enterprise—business visits, and no more.

After Bexley had been some months at Choolaypore, he thought of adding a serial as an extra feature to his paper; and by way of enhancing its popularity, he would tap the local talent. So one day the following announcement appeared under "Editorial":—

"The Editor of the *Ariel* is open to consider contributions for a serial of from forty to fifty thousand words. Liberal remuneration offered for a suitable tale. It should contain love interest, and—preferably—be typewritten. Stamps and addressed wrapper to be enclosed—for return in case of rejection."

The above had been inserted twice, when Mrs. Kavindish—one of Society's constellations—called at the *Ariel* office.

"I have come," said she, "in answer to your notice regarding a serial. Here is one," dumping a thick roll on to the table: "a love story, but not typewritten."

"May I ask if the hand is easily legible?" queried Bexley, drawing a chair for his visitor.

"Oh yes. I wrote the story for a ladies' magazine a year or two ago; but I never sent it, as my marriage intervened, and we came out to India."

"May I look at it?"

"Certainly."

Bexley glanced through the MS., saw that the handwriting was sufficiently decipherable, and that it presented about the necessary length.

"Very well. If you can leave the MS. with me, I will read it ; and if satisfied, I shall be pleased to make you an offer."

"Oh, I do not look for payment, thank you ; I am only extremely anxious to see it in print."

"In that case, I will read the work all the more readily," replied Bexley, smiling. "An editor does not often meet with clients who waive the subject of honorarium."

"Thank you. Nevertheless, I shall be so delighted if you decide favourably ! Er—when do you think you can let me know ? "

"In a day or two, I promise you. I will make time to read it—busy as I always am."

"How really kind of you ! I shall look out so anxiously for your dictum. Good morning ! " And away she went.

Poor Bexley ! Though the calligraphy did not worry him much, he found the whole thing badly put together, the work evidently of a tyro. To begin with, the story was too long for the plot ; the interest not sufficiently sustained ; love and religion unduly mixed up ; the plot feeble and not plausible enough. He sat up late that night, patiently ploughing through that MS., and next morning wrote requesting Mrs. Kavindish to call. She drove over at once. He told her as delicately as he could of the shortcomings that marred her work, which, however prominent in manuscript, would glare luridly in print, and that he regretted exceedingly his inability to use the tale. The lady was so crestfallen, so disappointed, that, after the manner of her sex, she sat down and began crying. Now Bexley—unlike some editors we wot of—had a heart ; woman's tears always appealed to

him. He soothed her, and undertook to revise the story himself and have it typewritten, provided she would call over before office hours in the mornings, to hear and approve of the instalment he had prepared the night previous. Mrs. Kavindish expressed her gratitude in feeling terms, agreed to be there every morning, and went away comforted. Encroaching on the little leisure he could give himself, and relegating a deal of work to his sub-editor, Bexley steadily tackled that MS., keeping his typist busy until nearly midnight.

On the first morning, Mrs. Kavindish brought a lady friend—interested in the business; then she took to bringing several: while Bexley, on his part, started regaling them with tea, which—woman-like again—his fair visitors enjoyed. Men too commenced dropping in on some pretence or other, curious to take stock of “that *Ariel* Johnny” about whom the women were gabbling. All were favourably impressed; and on the day that the first instalment of Mrs. Kavindish’s reconstructed story showed in the paper, the authoress was so enchanted that before leaving the office she insisted on Bexley coming to dinner. She invited a lot of people to meet him, and Colonel Kavindish, his host, finding that “the Editor fellow” was quite all right, advised him to come out of his shell, call round, and take his legitimate stand in Society. Bexley, after a little deliberation, acted on the hint. Everybody received him; invitations poured in; the messes invited him to their public guest-nights, and made him honorary member. The serial, from the pen of a Choolaypore lady, gave an extra fillip to the *Ariel*; and then, when it was drawing to a close, and that announcement again

appeared, calling for another contribution, Mrs. Kavindish timidly asked Bexley if he would accept a second story from her—gratis, as before.

“I would, with pleasure,” he replied kindly, “but——”

“I know what you are going to say,” she interrupted. “You will not be able to help me in revising it—as you did with the former one.”

“Well—er—I’m afraid I’d not have the time, and——”

“I quite understand. But I have cut my story out of the paper and pasted it in a book. I have marked wherever your master hand proclaims itself, by which I shall be guided, and allow no more crudities to creep in. May I?”

“You may.”



## CHAPTER IX

### THE RAILWAY MAN

THE Indian Railways are either "State" or owned by Companies—guaranteed and not. The principal lines are the Great Indian Peninsula ; the Bombay, Baroda, & Central Indian, starting from Bombay ; the East Indian, from Calcutta ; the East Coast, the South Indian, and Southern Mahratta, from Madras ; and the North-Western, serving Upper India down to the port of Kurrachee in Scinde. Besides the above, there are hosts of minor systems—State and Company : those of similar gauges having running rights over each other's lines. Of course, the controlling and executive bodies are Europeans ; but most of the subordinate berths are filled by natives—to the exclusion of our countrymen, and even the Eurasian. When you take into consideration the hundreds of whites out there, fit and willing to work, it seems hard that they should be passed over in favour of the indigenes.

With regard to Indian railway travelling, what forcibly strikes the stranger is the unconscionable waste of time, not in the actual running 'twixt stops, but at the smaller stations *en route*, where anything from five to fifteen minutes is apparently frittered away. It is not owing to press of passengers or complicity of traffic. Half a dozen natives alight, an equal number board ; and although it may be a single-track, the crossing station is nowhere near, and the next follow-on not due for

hours. No : the passengers are disposed of in a few seconds ; the temporary bustle dies out ; and, seemingly, there is no earthly reason why the train should not proceed—schedule or no schedule. The engine-men hop off their engine ; the two guards desert their brake vans ; and all indulge in a chat with the stationmaster, drink water from the filter, smoke, and perhaps start a little horse-play. At last a bell chatters somewhere inside ; it is the clear-line(!) signal. The gossipers disperse, regain their places, and the train moves out.

The headquarters of a railway is generally at the more important terminus, where, in the best part of the building, are the offices of the Manager or Agent, Chief Engineer, Locomotive Superintendent, Traffic Superintendent, Auditor, and so on. None of these good folks are much in evidence about the railway premises : they drive up to a private entrance, disappear into their respective dens, and remain there till it is time to hie home. You do see them, however, when they go down the line on inspection, or any special business. Take the Chief Engineer, for instance : his luxurious car is attached to a train, detached at his destination, and shunted into a siding—right away from all noise. The station staff are on pins during the great man's stay : everything is frantically brushed up ; every fellow in his best uniform and on his best behaviour : no larking or chatting so long as that car with its all-powerful occupant is there. The men on the incoming trains spot it, and religiously keep their posts ; while the native stationmaster hectors about the platform—verily eaten up with excess of zeal. Then, when in due

course the order is given to attach that pestilent car to such-and-such a train, surreptitious looks of relief are exchanged ; the stationmaster personally oversees the hand-shunting of that car ; the European P.W. Inspector stands by during the process of coupling ; and at last, when that car—at the tail-end of the train—vanishes round the curve, men breathe again : the P.W. Inspector hurries away to his bungalow ; off go the uniforms ; some light their *beedies*, or husk cigarettes ; while all ululate together at the top of their discordant voices.

For administrative purposes, the line is divided into districts, with responsible executive heads for each department—Traffic, Locomotive, and Engineering. Blessington Nailor is the Traffic Superintendent of one of these districts, and resides at the rather considerable station of Kutthi. It is a Company's line. Kutthi is far removed from headquarters, and Blessington Nailor has it pretty well his own way—a fact he rejoices in, for, being of a rather cantankerous, bellicose temperament,—the result of having been overlooked in promotion,—he is inclined to come to loggerheads with his chiefs : indeed, this tendency to fight has landed him in hot water more than once. But he is a smart officer, stern and unbending with his subordinates, and able to get a good day's work out of the laziest. His particular aversion is an inspection tour by the "nobs" ; for, while ready to argue the lot "out of their boots," he is obliged to put them up and feed them when they come to his station. His countenance partakes of the keen, vulpine order ; he is incisive of speech with railway people—above or below him, but pleasant

enough with the outside world ; and there is a latent fund of humour in the man which is apt to show at times. Kutthi is a dull little civil sub-station, with a large native town attached, four miles from the railway, and boasts of half a dozen or so of whites ; but Blessington Nailor being a busy man, he is not often able to go to them ; nor do they come more frequently to him—because of the distance. As a relief to his monotony, he makes a point of going over to the platform when the mail trains are signalled. He strolls about, with his eyes everywhere, the centre of respectful attention to the employés, who follow his every movement in fear and trembling. When the train draws up, he takes stock of the first-class travellers, especially if there be women among them. Should he by chance get into conversation with some fair one, he will lean in at her carriage window and talk—regardless of the lapse of time. He ignores the “clear-line” bell, while the station-master dare not start the train—with his superior hanging on to the foot-board. Then, at last, when the silence on the platform makes itself felt, he drops off, raises his hat to the lady, and gives the “right-away.” He can be obliging to the travelling public when he likes, in spite of his somewhat soured disposition. For instance, when ten officers in a six-berth compartment of a troop train—halting one evening at Kutthi—buttonholed him, and asked how they were to sleep that night, he promptly ordered an additional first-class to be tacked on, and then wrote a “stinger” to headquarters, charging them with not supplying sufficient accommodation to such-and-such a train carrying the Salisbury Regiment. Again, when a lady





SORTING TEA.

passenger—about to add to the number of His Majesty's lieges—could proceed no farther, and a sympathising female fellow-traveller represented the case to him, Blessington Nailor immediately had the expectant fair one carried across to his bungalow, vacated it for the station waiting-room, and sent a man on a bicycle flying to Kutthi to summon the civil apothecary and his solitary nurse: these arrangements being attended with the happiest results.

On one occasion, while travelling over his district, he boarded a compartment containing two passengers: one, a middle-aged gentleman, at the farther end, and a plain-looking lady by the door of entry—both reading, with the whole breadth of the carriage between them. Well, Blessington Nailor sat down *vis-à-vis* the man, but did not start talking to him because he seemed intent on his book. Presently, the train reached a larger station, their carriage halting abreast of the refreshment-room. It was not any meal-time, so there was not the usual adjournment for the purpose by the European passengers; but the plain-faced lady alighted, and dived into the refreshment-room—opening into the ladies' waiting-room. Blessington Nailor at this moment catching the eye of the man opposite, remarked with a grin, "Suppose she has gone in there for a nip of sorts."

"Sir!" thundered the traveller angrily, "allow me to tell you that lady is my sister!"

"Oh, is she?" retorted B. N. calmly. "Sorry I spoke. But don't get excited; I have a sister too, and have known her want a nip occasionally."

## CHAPTER X

### THE PLANTER

THE Planter proper raises tea, coffee, and indigo, while smaller fry handle pepper, spices, etc. The tea man is principally found in Assam, and on hill ranges in other parts. The coffee man flourishes on the Nilgherries, in Mysore, Cochin, Travancore ; while the indigo man is at his best in Bengal.

Naturally enough, most tea and coffee estates are in the wilds ; in consequence of which the Planter leads a lonely, isolated existence. Those whose *totes* (gardens, plantations) skirt civilisation are better off than others, whose locations are embedded in distant jungles, their nearest neighbours being perhaps ten miles distant. Of gentle birth though he may be—and generally is—he probably has no resources ; the very calling he has chosen, or been forced into, points to the supposition. If he does happen to be musical, he plays the banjo, and “oft in the stilly night,” after dinner, he sits in the veranda, thrumming and singing to the mosquitoes some melody of love and home, telling of the sadness which pervades his soul.

The Planter is the very essence of hospitality, which he is only too eager to dispense, in a rough-and-ready style, to any waif who chances to come his way, be he Tom, Dick, or Harry ; anyone is welcome so long as the one serves as a break in the weary solitude of the other.



During the slack season the Planter journeys down to the nearest station or cantonment, where he is made welcome by the residents, and always finds someone to take him in; for his cheery bonhomie is a sure passport to open doors and jolly good-fellowship. He will regale you with stories of big game; of wonders in zoology, entomology, botany—to be seen out at his “diggings”; and he will literally jump at you if you propose paying him a visit.

He has to be something of a doctor, not only on his own account, but of his several hundred coolies or labourers, who come to him from the low country, and are entirely dependent on the master should they fall ill. Where several estates are grouped, and the owners well-to-do, they club together and subsidise a medical man, who is housed in a bungalow—with dispensary attached—run up by his employers. “The Doctor,” as everybody calls him, is either a qualified private practitioner who cannot make head down country, or a retired member of the Indian Medical Service. If in either case he is a *sahib*, he is treated as such by the Planters; if not a *sahib*, he has the sense to know his place, and keep it. He is provided with a horse or a *dhooly* (litter), to carry him—if called for—to outlying estates situated within reasonable distance; but the far-away, isolated Planter has to do his own doctoring. If he gets sick, he assiduously doses himself; for, unless he is at his last gasp, he cannot desert the plantation—to allow it to run to rack and ruin during his absence. Every morning, after muster-roll, and the different parties leave for their apportioned tasks, the medicine chest is produced, and the sick paraded

for treatment. Fever is the chief malady, and the Planter's method of dealing therewith affords amusement to the onlooker.

"What's the matter with you?" he asks of the first applicant, the conversation being carried on in the vernacular.

"Fever, sir," he replies, with chattering teeth and shaking limbs.

"Have you brought water?"

"Yes, sir"—exhibiting a brass drinking-vessel.

"Step forward, then," says the Planter, plunging a teaspoon into a tin of cinchona powder.

The coolie obeys the order.

"Now, open your mouth and put out your tongue," is the next mandate.

The fellow opens his mouth and protrudes the unruly member—on which the master promptly empties that spoonful of cinchona, tells the recipient to take a gulp of water and lie in the sun under his blanket till he "sweats like a pig." He then deals with the rest in a similarly summary fashion, in accordance with their several ailments.

Though the bungalow may be bare and the fixtures primitive, the Planter believes in good things, and provides himself with creature comforts, both eatables and drinkables. He keeps a regular farmyard—milch cows and goats, a flock of sheep, and a fowl run; all of which—if a married man—the wife looks after. He gets his house supplies out by coolies from the nearest cantonment Europe-shop; or, if a "big bug," either from the Presidency or direct from home. He is unconventional as to dress, and though he believes in soap and the bath tub, he becomes alienated from collars, cuffs, ties, waistcoats, razors, and the

hair-oil bottle. Having to ride about his estate to supervise operations, his usual working attire is suggestive of the jockey or horsy man. He is booted and spurred, flannel-shirted, silk-cummerbunded, shooting-jacketed, cord-trouserred, and sun-pith-hatted; while it is purgatorial for him to "dress up" when he visits a married neighbour or he takes a run into the station. As a rule he is a temperate man, though, Heaven knows, the life he perforce leads is enough to drive him into D.T.: some are so driven, when of course they and their estates just go to the dogs.

You occasionally come across a bachelor Planter whose views on a certain form of morality are somewhat lax. This is he who fits himself with a partner of his loneliness, generally a daughter of the soil, who is no mean helpmate, for she sews on his buttons, keeps the servants in order, and though, if she is Hindoo or Mohammedan, and consequently debarred from eating with him, she looks after his meals, sees that they are properly cooked and ready for him when he comes in at all sorts of irregular hours. Others go upon a different plan. Supposing several single men are working estates more or less contiguous, and there happens to be some fair but frail one—European or Eurasian—down yonder in the station, they agree to "have her up" for a spell. A trustworthy native is furnished with funds and a letter of invitation. The woman of course decides to go, for there is money in it: the emissary thereupon procures a covered bullock-cart, and conducts his charge to the first estate, as previously agreed on—perhaps tossed up for. Here she stays for a while, and then shifts from house to house, returning as

she came—with a bag of rupees, which she gleefully banks in the station post-office, and sits down to await the next call in some other direction ; in the meantime holding herself open to local demands. In a later chapter, we hope to say something more on the subject.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE BANKER

EACH Presidency possesses its own Bank—the Bank of Bengal, the Bank of Bombay, and the Bank of Madras, with headquarters in the respective capitals and branches at the more important *mofussil* stations. Other Banks—some engineered from home—are established in principal business centres, but they do not ramify; while there are yet others, insignificant concerns, depending upon local trade. Of native Banks—which are legion—the most noteworthy is that of Bunselaul Abeerchund, Ram Rutton, *Rao Bahadur* of Lahore, who is popularly supposed capable of buying out the Bank of England itself. Bunselaul earned the title of *Rao Bahadur* by loyal service to the British during the great Mutiny of 1857–58.

The Presidency Banks are in a manner affiliated with Government, which entrusts them with their money; and where no District Treasury exists, but a Branch Bank does, it looks to the latter to pay official salaries and such-like demands, previously *viséd* by auditing authority.

We have to do with our Branch Bank. There it is, located in one of the finest bungalows the station can afford, with ample grounds, out-offices, and stabling. The establishment consists of Skot-teigh, the Agent, and Sarvy, the Accountant, the sole Europeans; all the rest—from the *Khâjâncee* or Cash-keeper to junior clerk—being natives.

Now Skotteigh—a married man—enjoys eight hundred rupees *per mensem*, with free quarters in the Bank building, some free domestics, lighting, and sundry “pickings”—permitted by his employers. Poor Sarvy, on the other hand, with two hundred and fifty rupees a month, has to pay his own house rent and keep a trap to take him to office, in addition to his other living expenses. The Bank gives him no gratis oil or servants, and he gets no “pickings.” Of course, the Skotteighs and Sarvy are in Society, being *sahibs*; but were they not *sahibs*, the overwhelming necessitous majority would get them tolerated, for obvious reasons. Officially, Skotteigh and Sarvy pull well together. Occasionally, the latter—keen and long-headed—saves his chief from some professional *faux pas*, whereat the Agent is nasty till his wounded *amour propre* heals up, and all becomes smooth water again; for, truth to tell, he thinks highly of Sarvy’s acumen, and could not get on without him. Socially, too, they are on good terms. Mrs. Skotteigh, who has a touch of the goody-goody in her, treats the Accountant with patronising condescension; expects him to regard her invitations to dinner as mandates; gives him tickets for her Charity Bazaars; and looks on him as a sort of whipper-in at her periodical tennis-parties. Skotteigh keeps himself almost hermetically sealed up in his Agent’s sanctum, remote from the general business part; and to see him, you must send in your card, and wait till you are admitted. Sarvy has his desk in the main office; he is therefore more accessible: so people, knowing that he has the ear of the Agent, generally go to the Accountant first; and if he cannot settle their affairs, and

says that the chief must be consulted, they set to and beg him to put in a good word for them.

With regard to loans, the rules insist on approved personal or tangible security, in the absence of which Skotteigh frequently has to refuse applications.

One day, Mattross, bringing two brother-subs as guarantors, applied for a loan of five hundred rupees, repayable by monthly instalments of one hundred. Skotteigh glanced inquiringly at Sarvy—who chanced to be present—as if seeking his opinion; but the latter made no sign one way or the other, and the Agent—unaware of aught against Mattross or his sureties—granted the advance. Now Sarvy knew the fellows well as extravagant young “rips,” and feared that the Bank would experience difficulty in recovering the money. Under ordinary circumstances, he would have cautioned Skotteigh against complying; but it happened that the trio were the backbone of the cantonment cricket team, and Sarvy being the Captain thereof, fellow-feeling would not allow him to be the means of their being refused. Mattross divined this, and next day warmly thanked Sarvy for “observing silence.”

On another occasion, Mrs.—Major—Quenille came to the Bank and asked to see Sarvy privately. He ushered her into a little back room, and had hardly shut the door ere his visitor commenced to cry—generally a diplomatic move with women. Presently, she produced a valuable bracelet—her husband’s wedding gift, she said, and which was inscribed “From J. F. Q. to E. G. Q.” She then explained she was hard up for money, so would he advance her two hundred rupees on the bracelet?

Ignorant, in this instance, of what lay behind, Sarvy inquired why she did not ask the Agent, as the security offered was sufficient, and there would be no difficulty? No: she feared that Skotteigh might let the cat out of the bag, and her husband must on no account get wind of it; that, in plain terms, she had lost at bridge the night before, and was bound to pay up her liabilities by evening. Sarvy would have lent the money himself—had he had it by him; but, wishing to see the lady through, he resolved—in spite of her qualms—to obtain Skotteigh's sanction to the loan. So requesting her to wait there a few minutes, he went to Skotteigh, explained the case, and showed him the bracelet. The Agent agreed, and told him to complete the matter. He paid Mrs. Quenille the rupees; she surrendered the bracelet, signed the pro. note, and drove away. The pledge was lodged in the "safe-deposit," and for a time nothing happened. Then a week or so afterwards, while the Bank people attended a public tennis tournament, they heard folks saying that Mrs. Quenille had been burgled of a bracelet—marked so-and-so. That lady stood surrounded by a group of sympathisers, but on catching sight of the Skotteighs and Sarvy coming towards her, she gave the latter a swift imploring look, which made him suspect some "hanky-panky" to be at the bottom of the affair.

"What!" commenced the momentarily forgetful Skotteigh, on hearing someone repeat the initials on the missing bracelet, "I——"

"See there, Skotteigh!" suddenly whispered Sarvy, jumping at the Agent, grabbing his arm, turning him round, and pointing vaguely at the



crowd of natives who fringed the ground. "There's the Cash-keeper beckoning! Perhaps something important! Come on!"

By this ruse he averted the threatened danger. Mrs. Quenille subsequently confessed to Sarvy that her husband had missed the bracelet, and as she had not the courage to enlighten him on the subject, he concluded that it had been stolen. Then, in due course, when the poor woman commanded enough money to redeem her property, the question was how to square it with her husband. She consulted Sarvy, who suggested that she should make a clean breast of it to Quenille; but she shrank from the idea. So, pitying her in her cruel dilemma, Sarvy took the bull by the horns, went over to the Major, and told him the whole story in such deprecatory terms that Quenille, quite won over, promised to make no fuss. He had evidently been true to his word, for when Sarvy next encountered Mrs. Q. she overwhelmed him with gratitude, and, had no one been by, it was a toss-up whether or not she would have fallen on his neck and kissed him!

## CHAPTER XII

### THE POLICEMAN

NOT in the home sense—suggested by the rank-and-file “Bobby,” so well known as “The Policeman,” whether in a London crush or a lonely country lane. No: the Indian prototypes of our alert, burly guardians of the Law are represented by small-sized, drumsticky, and rather insouciant *lall puggree-wallahs* (red-turbaned men) of Bengal, *sepoys* of Bombay, and *sayvoors* (officials) of Madras.

Out there, “The Policeman” is the universal Anglo-Indian appellation of the D.S.P., or District Superintendent of Police, the local head, and his second-in-command, the A.D.S.P., or Assistant District Superintendent of Police; both *sahibs*, drawing fair salaries, and with a great idea of their own importance—for beyond a few inspectors and sergeants, there are no other Europeans in a District force. The D.S.P. lives at the District headquarters, while the A.D.S.P. ruralises at the next important town, often altogether native; but he is not very far, and runs in by train on business—more frequently pleasure; for there is no companionship out at his place, and his superior, who is an easy-going fellow, never objects.

Tylberry, the D.S.P., and DeCremor, the A.D.S.P., are Uncovenanted Civilians. The Indian Civil Police is organised on a quasi-military basis, and it is diverting to note how our friends ape the soldier. They wear effective uniforms, are good

horsemen, indulge in a little cavalry swagger,—when it is safe to do so,—and are usually booted or putted and spurred “up to the nines.” It is especially amusing to watch Tylberry drilling the men—who know their facings, true, but are apt to mess up a simple evolution, which generally ends in a fiasco on their part and some “fatherly” language on that of the officer. De Cremor is his own master out where he lives; but when he visits headquarters, Tylberry makes him put the men through—all plain-sailing while no “regulars” halt on the roadway to look on at the fun; but directly De Cremor sights any of these, he tumbles to pieces, goes up to Tylberry, says he is feeling ill or something, and rides home.

When Tylberry went to England the other day on short leave, he was wearing a beard, moustache, and half-whiskers, all of a deep brown hue. De Cremor officiated D.S.P., while a European Inspector acted A.D.S.P. Well, at the expiration of his holiday, on landing at Bombay, Tylberry wired De Cremor to expect him by the following midnight mail, and that he would resume charge the next day. De Cremor planned to receive his chief with “all the honours,” and arranged for a full morning parade—to welcome the returned wanderer. It being the hot weather, the little ceremony would be held at five a.m. in Tylberry’s compound. De Cremor had intended meeting the night mail, but was prevented by a murder case supervening. However, at two in the morning he ran over to Tylberry’s bungalow, and found him in bed—out in the dark veranda. His footsteps aroused the sleeper, who called out, “Who’s there?”

“ I—De Cremor. So you’ve got back all right, Tylberry. Sorry I could not meet you ; have been engaged in a murder case, and have only just got away. We’re all coming here at five to give you a ‘ Royal Salute ’ ; so be up to receive it. Ta-ta ! ”

In the growing dawn the police under De Cremor lined up facing the bungalow ; and presently out came Tylberry—in full uniform. But De Cremor, instead of calling the necessary words of command, stared stupidly at his chief, and a ripple of exclamations ran along the half-disciplined ranks : “ *Dhadee vughaira sub moonda deyah !* ” (He has shaved off his beard, etc.), tittered the Moslems ; “ *Elan shorrshipootongo !* ” (He has scraped the whole thing off !), sniggered the Tamils ; and “ *Meesalloo geesalloo unntha gorriginchinnaroo !* ” (He has shaved off moustache and everything !), murmured the Telugus ; while De Cremor—in a maze of wonderment—accosted the apparition—

“ Er—come, I say, you know : is it Tylberry ? ”

“ Of course it is ! ” chuckled the other.

“ What the h—er—what’s the meaning of this—turning yourself into a ‘ blooming woman ’ ? Why, even the men are all laughing at you ! How will you face the folks here ? ”

“ Got engaged at home, dear boy ; and the lady insisted that I should shave clean—that’s all. Come on ! Let’s have the ‘ honours ’ over, and I’ll sing out for some tea.”

By evening, those policemen had disseminated all over the bazaars that their Superintendent while in his own country had taken some vow, and now wore his face clean—like any woman ; in consequence of which, Tylberry constituted an

object of curiosity well over the proverbial nine days, for the clean-shaving craze had yet to catch on amongst us.

Of all Government servants, the Police Officer has perforce to be a "dab" at the vernacular. To be really efficient in an Indian language, the European must be fully up both in the high-flown as well as the ordinary *âm khass*, or colloquial. For instance, if he is conversing with a native big-wig, it would never do to use the same terms and forms admissible when speaking to his servants or to coolies: he has to discriminate. For should he resort to the "vulgar tongue" in dealing with a high native, he would cause grave offence; while inversely, the application of polite and refined forms of speech would be so much double-Dutch to the illiterate. Pronunciation, too, is of the first importance, and the new arrival—though he may have studied, say, Telugu at his university—finds himself at sea till he conquers the phonetic niceties of the dialect from the people around him.

A freshly appointed A.D.S.P., who had got into the Police "through interest," was posted to a place in the Northern Circars, where he had just passed his departmental examination in Telugu. Well, while in the veranda with a visitor, a pariah dog in the compound commenced yelping; whereupon our friend called out (pronounce as written, please) "*Bantroot!*" or peon: he should have said "*Buntroath.*" However, the peon understood that much, and answered the summons. "*A kakka katoo!*" (Beat that dog!), continued the young fellow. The peon stared. The mandate was repeated; and it was not till the visitor—an older man—said, "*A kookka noo kottoo,*" that the peon

fathomed what was wanted, and forthwith made for the offending mongrel.

An instance of the inutility of sporting too high-flown vernacular in certain situations may be illustrated by the following anecdote of a D.S.P. named Bethnill, a bit "haw-hawish," who had been transferred from Oude to Scinde. Oude is the home of the purest Hindustani or Hindee ; whereas in Scinde—unless you are a Persian or Scindee scholar—you have to resort to the commonest Hindustani, which constitutes a species of lingua franca between Europeans and natives. Well, Bethnill, who prided himself on his command of elegant Hindee, was staying for the time being with a brother Police Officer who had long been in the Province. A day or so after his arrival, a petty, unlettered Beloochee chief came to pay his respects to the new man, within whose jurisdiction his little principality lay. After "compliments," and noticing that Bethnill wore crape on his arm, the Belooche—unfamiliar with our customs—respectfully inquired the reason.

"Ah—er—*hummara kiblâgah wâffuth p̄ya*" (My father is dead), replied Bethnill grandiloquently, drumming up his choicest.

The chief was fogged, and glanced nervously at the other man, who promptly solved the difficulty by growling, "*Oonka bâp murr̄gya*" (His father is dead), using the common colloquial, which at once made itself intelligible to the visitor's comprehension.



AFTERNOON TEA ON THE LAWN—CALCUTTA.





## CHAPTER XIII

### THE TRADESMAN

At the Presidencies the Tradesman is so numerically strong that he has not that individuality which attaches to him up-country—he is lost in his own crowd, as it were, and we are unable to identify him when he appears at evening on the Calcutta *Lall Rusta* (Red Road), the Bombay Apollo Bunder, or the Madras Marina ; but here, at Ghabrowabad, in spite of its big force of three arms, its large contingent of civilians, supplemented by a substantial queue of *oi polloi*, which the Tradesman materially helps to make up, he is more in evidence, and we know him for what he is.

The oblong central parade-ground in the heart of the cantonment is girt first by the Mall, or tan gallop—used by equestrians ; then a broad road, one of the principal drives, and a certain portion of which is fringed by the Tradesmen's shops. Let us see : we have Cutfisher & Co., wines, mineral waters, provisions, and tobacco ; Huckaback & Co., booksellers, printers, publishers, and stationers ; Tusk & Podgett, milliners, tailors, and outfitters ; Blitzen, German photographer and portrait painter ; Foldy, Riddle & Co., piano, band instrument, and music warehouse ; Linseed, the chemist, with a qualified medical man always in attendance on the premises ; Campobasso, the Italian confectioner and purveyor of wedding breakfasts, banquets ; John Ligg, ladies' and gentlemen's boot and shoe

maker; and Patriarck Brothers, art furniture dealers, house-agents, etc.

The above named are the principal people, and occupy the better-class, more showy premises : the houses stand in enclosures of their own, with flower-gardens and a carriage-sweep extending from gates to portico ; but interwedged between, in humbler tenements, are smaller aspirants for public patronage—poor folks, without much money behind them, who come from no one knows where, set up, endure for a time, then announce a sale “at enormous reductions,” close, vanish, and are heard of no more ; though some of them make a moonlight flit of it, and leave a heap of debts, when there is outgrabbing enough among the deluded creditors. The native Europe-shops have a street to themselves down in the bazaars, their business being chiefly with the soldiery, the poorer Europeans, and Eurasians ; for lo, you ! these fellows will supply the identical articles on sale by any of the above-mentioned white dealers for 25 per cent. less cost. Some of the more ambitious among the “ bazaar folks ”—as they are contemptuously styled—have migrated to the European quarter, and by a persistent system of underselling have taken root, and manage to secure a good slice of custom from our own people.

The Tradesmen form a distinct community. They run a society of their own, and maintain a sort of club or recreation-rooms, erected by subscription among themselves, fitted with a bar, billiard and card rooms, skating (roller) rink, and a spacious hall with a stage and large auditorium, in addition to the ordinary ball-room, reading, smoking, and private-party lounges. All this is

sacred to themselves ; the *sahibs* have no free entry here. But should a strolling theatrical, variety, concert, or other troupe visit the station, the "Shop people" at once throw open their stage-room—far better than the poky one up at the hotel—and we are allowed in as the audience ; or should any of us—man or woman—want to indulge in roller-skating, they are made welcome at the rink. Many of our Tradesmen are members of the Provincial Masonic Brotherhood, and when there is a dinner or other social function you meet them at the Lodge—quite on an equality. Again, if you are a volunteer, you rub shoulders with them in the ranks, for the majority are good citizen soldiers : were they not, the corps would disband for lack of numbers. Indeed, Cutfisher, of Cutfisher & Co., who joined the movement at its very inception, is Lieutenant-Colonel of the battalion ; and although you may go into his shop and order him to send along a bottle of whisky, a tin of sausages, or a packet of Virginia, he orders you about on the parade-ground, and you must salute him. Their women-folk are chic and fashionable—more so in many cases than our own fair ones. They appear at the Band, or other places of general public resort ; seldom accompanied by their men, who prefer sloping off to the club, or remaining at the shops till closing-time. They come two or three together—in open carriages ; when one of them—Mrs. Tusk, for example, attired in the *ne plus ultra* of Bond Street—will glance with calm disdain at the Hon'ble Mrs. Shepton-Mallet's quiet get-up, as that lady's modest victoria halts cheek-by-jowl with Mrs. Tusk's more pretentious turn-out. To their praise be it said that the Tradesmen never

presume ; some even abstain from taking any cognizance of you in passing. Others, with their females, going for an evening drive, may cross you with your females, on the same errand : the man lifts his hat, and you, in duty bound, return the compliment ; but the women on either side make no sign. At ceremonial parades, when the Divisional General is on a visit, the Tradesmen's traps do not attempt to enter the enclosure set apart for the élite, from which to witness the spectacle ; they draw up wherever they can find room.

Our exotic shop-girls are not alluring ; those with attractions having no need to come so far afield, in quest of employment or—husbands. Old Blitzen, however, finding himself unable to cope with increasing business, and getting into arrears with his engagements, imported a certain Fräulein Jaktze as an assistant, advertised her as coming from the leading studio in Leipsic, and that, between them, orders would be carried out with more dispatch. Well, the first call on the Fräulein's energies was taking a group of the local and a visiting cricket team. The twenty-two assembled in the pavilion, and at the appointed time—instead of old Blitzen, Fräulein Jaktze drove up, alighted, and commenced unloading her apparatus. Muttering exclamations of pleased surprise, a dozen fellows rushed forward to assist, for they beheld a “ deuced ” pretty woman, “ fetchingly ” attired. Of course, there was nothing good enough for her : they all vied in their attentions ; and as she spoke but little English, one chap, Scrutcheon, created an immense amount of envy by conversing with the fair Teuton in her own

tongue—to the obvious exclusion of the others not so linguistically gifted. After that, a mania for having their photographs taken seized the irresponsibles of the station: Blitzen's shop was besieged, and albeit money poured in, he found his premises well on the way to become a resort for every bachelor in the place. Not for a moment to insinuate that the Fräulein was not all right and proper; it was her beauty, her continental *espièglerie* that constituted the attraction: it brought business, and men were constantly dropping in, who insisted on being attended to by the girl. At last, Blitzen had to relegate her to the background, and wait on the public himself. This suited the more staid of his customers, but his takings fell off, and he found himself on the horns of a dilemma: he began to repent of having imported Fräulein Jaktze, and seriously thought of sending her back to the Fatherland. However, that fascinating young person settled the question for him by suddenly disappearing; and he heard nothing about her for a week, when she wrote to Blitzen announcing her marriage with Scrutcheon before the Presidency Registrar.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE DOMICILED PENSIONER

HE is generally a *ci-devant* Indian Army Officer or Uncovenanted Civilian, seldom if ever a Covenanted Man, for his fat pension (see Chap. III. of this Part) enables him to live in ease at home or elsewhere, while with the others it is oftener than not the stress of *res angusta* that compels them to remain in India on quitting the Service; for *malgré* the dwindled rupee and the increased expense of living there, it is after all more the poor man's country than England. But there are further causes that militate against the Pensioner returning to the land of his birth. His state of health may render the move injudicious: the doctors telling him that he would be jumping from the frying-pan into the fire; that, having been so long in the East, the English climate would probably fix on his lungs; and that, unless he was tired of this mundane sphere, he had better "stick on" where he is. Some—perhaps widowed, children all off their hands, and no friends or relatives in the old country—hunker down in favoured localities, preferring the life, the climate, the associations of Ind to the genteel poverty that their few hundreds a year would bring them in England. A man of yet another type, finding himself standing alone in the world, and practically his own mentor, abjures the society he has hitherto moved in, throws self-respect to the winds, and takes unto

him a female companion of the left-hand, and who, installed as mistress of his house, takes the place of the dear departed. A few, during their active career, may marry a *chee-chee* or Eurasian, a step that generally results in a large "coloured" family. Now, when the husband is shelved, and ought, properly speaking, make for home, the wife, who naturally clings to the Orient, biases her lord into relinquishing all thoughts of England; so he invests what little money he has in a house, assimilates himself with people of his wife's class, and accepts the inevitable—for look you, officer and gentleman though he is, his social undoing originated in his marriage; it standing to reason that Society would no more than negatively tolerate his tawny wife—and only that in public, never in private. Anyhow, with his retirement he is completely effaced, and most of those who once knew him know him no more.

Let us look up Captain Freegude—in his comfortable little bungalow on the Julsoor Road. Formerly, while in a crack native infantry battalion, he took, for better or for worse, Miss Euphemia Irene Leonora Sumball, the buxom daughter of old Sumball, the postmaster. Old Sumball was a full-blooded native, but converted, Christianised, and transmogrified into what you call an "Indo-Briton." When a post-office clerk on twenty rupees a month,—an income not to be sneezed at in those days by the half-castes,—he married rather a fair Eurasian, who, according to the Anglo-Indian method of computing mixed blood, presented about six annas in the rupee—e.g. three-eighths of her vital fluid was white, five-eighths black; and Mrs. Freegude—with about three-fourths

of the former in her—was the outcome. Now, the Freegudes are blessed with no less than nine children, with a year between each,—four boys and five girls,—ranging from an almost sickly white to sepia, according as each inclined towards father or mother.

There is old Freegude, bearded, unkempt, spectacled, clad in a flaring chintz sleeping-suit, smoking a long cheroot, and conning the newspaper as he reclines in a veranda lounge-chair, while his tinted progeny gambol noisily about the place—to be called to order by the mother, whose metallic voice every now and then squawks at them from within; but a silence falls as you push open the gate and walk up to the portico.

“Hallow, Freegude! How are you?”

“Pretty middling, thanks, Smith. Fancy our meeting again after all these years! Very good of you to come and see me.”

“Not at all. Arrived on transfer last week: heard you had settled down here, so thought I’d look you up.”

“Yes,” he replied, sighing, “it is a case of ‘settled down’: I’m rooted here for good. When I retired, my wife persuaded me not to go home; and perhaps she was right,” glancing as he spoke at his youngsters, who stood in a group, staring mutely.

That was obvious: in addition to the sheet-anchor represented by his wife, he was moored fore-and-aft by nine kedges in the persons of his children, binding him fast to “India’s coral strand.” Before the conversation could be continued, “Pheemy” (Mrs. Freegude), in nude, slippered feet, corsetless, wearing a skirt and loose jacket of the same stuff as her husband’s sleeping-suit,



comes out, and in her peculiar *chee-chee* patois gives boisterous greeting.

"Oh, my!" she exclaims. "Thought I knew voice, Mr. Smith! Too glad only to see you. Too long since last meeting—no? But how you did come—walking, eh?"

We own to having used shanks' mare for the occasion; whereupon hospitable thoughts are stirred within her, and she resumes: "Oh, my! Sun too hot. You must have cup corffee and *appum* (rice cake) before you go off. Here, Eulalie!" to the eldest girl. "You run and tell Antonymoothoo to make and bring soon. Tell to put white cloth on tray—see?"

The refreshments are duly served; Mrs. Freegude jogs her husband into handing you his cheroot case, and then she retires—with the interesting announcement that she was about washing her head when you came, adding, with an oleaginous grin, displaying her splendid dental garniture, for which her race is renowned, that "men fellows always getting on better in chat when no ladies listening."

You draw Freegude out, and discover that time and circumstances have given a "croaky" touch to his sentiments. He abuses the Government in power at home: dubs the Lords a parcel of *carmaties* (boobies), the Commons an assembly of *muddeans* (nincompoops); opines that the Nation should never have allowed the present Ministry to get in, and that the obstructionists are the only well-wishers of England. But the Suffragettes, he says, ought to be whipped at the cart's tail. Referring to Indian affairs, he laments the existence of a knock-kneed Viceroy;

that Kitchener should have been overlooked for the Governor-Generalship ; affirms that as sure as God made little apples we shall have the Russians or the Japs about our ears at no distant date ; and that there will be another Mutiny sooner than we expect, etc. etc. Then we left him, saying nothing, but thinking much.

The better-to-do man who has made no *mésalliance*, and elects to end his days out there, generally hies him to the hills, or some temperate salubrious spot like Ranchi, Dehra, Poonah, Bangalore ; buys house property, sets himself up, calls round, gets into the swim, joins the club, subscribes liberally to everything that may be going, does not grumble or croak, makes himself agreeable, propitiates the Chaplain and congregation with a gift to the station church of a new lectern, procured from home, and sits under that lectern every Sunday evening. He has quite enough to live on, and has no need to go in for anything, such as planting, farming, etc. ; but if he has a hobby, he rides it, and, by taking care of his expenditure, maintains himself like the *sahib* he is, "looking the whole world in the face, for he owes not any man."

## CHAPTER XV

### THE CRANK, OR FADDIST

LEXICAL authority describes "A Crank" colloquially as an eccentric or crotcheteer, and "A Faddist" as a slave to some hobby or craze. There are plenty of these whimsy people among our brethren in India, who spend their energies, their leisure, and their money on particular pursuits to an extent bordering on the idiotic. Not that the pursuits themselves are always to be despised: horticulture, entomology, philately, ornithology, zoology, games of skill—all are tastes of elegance and refinement; but it is in the prosecution thereof that these fanatics, forgetful of Ovid's maxim, go bald-headed at it, and often make themselves ridiculous.

You will generally find our monomaniac to be unsociable, or at all events heavy on hand unless you start on his fad, and then there is no holding him.

Major Vollubles, doing duty at an eastern coast station, was a very keen ornithologist: his house resembled one huge aviary; for cages of birds pervaded the entire building. The clamour raised by these feathered pets was ear-splitting, and the concentrated odour arising from such a crowd sometimes overpowering. Vollubles, with a touch of blue blood in him, was most fastidious in the matter of his associates; his motto being, *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo*. He was very right and proper, and took care never to compromise himself in the eyes of his fellow-men.

One day, the matutinal barber informed our bird crank that a certain Mrs. O'Garrick, half-caste widow of an Irish Police Inspector, had just received a cage of Java sparrows from her sister residing in those parts.

"Pooh!" growled the Major. "I have a dozen Java sparrows."

"True, sir; their cage is in the back veranda. But one of *mem-sahib* O'Garrick's has a tuft on its head, which none of yours have. On seeing it yesterday, when I went to cut her son's hair, I resolved to inform your honour."

Quite enough for Vollubles. He had never heard or read of a crested Java sparrow: this, then, was probably a rare variety—or a freak; and he must have it at all costs. But how? Should he go to Widow O'Garrick's? No: 'twould be safe to be known, and people would talk. Asking her to bring over the bird was equally out of the question; even writing to request her to send it along wouldn't do, for his messenger would be sure to blab. At length, in his eagerness to possess that bird, he walked down to Mrs. O'Garrick's rather late at night, when everybody would be at dinner; for he knew the way, as the barber had incidentally specified the locality and described the bungalow. Passing through the gate, he halted in front of the little veranda, and finding all in darkness, he called in a low tone, "Anybody in?"

"Who that?" demanded a harsh female voice from inside.

"Er—a gentleman. I want to see one of your birds."

"Bird, eh? What bird?"

"The Java sparrow—with a tuft."

“ Oh, go away, man ! ” rejoined the voice, after a pause. “ You humbugging ! I know very well you officer fellows ! This is decent place ! People you want living in other street ! ”

Baffled and mortified, the Major left. But he was determined to get that tufted bird ; so next morning he commissioned the barber to negotiate the transaction, telling him to say that Mrs. O’Garrick could name her own figure. The barber succeeded, and soon came galumphing back with that tufted bird, together with an apology from the widow for her brusque treatment of the previous night ; but she did not know the officer, whom she imagined had come to her house by mistake. Vollubles was delighted with his acquisition, and gladly paid ten rupees—the price asked—through the barber. But although he strictly enjoined that artist—under pain of dismissal—to keep his mouth shut, and though that artist vowed by *Allah* to breathe not a word, the affair somehow got wind, and poor Vollubles, in spite of his explanations, was mercilessly chaffed for many a day.

The following anecdote is told by an old Indian Army Officer :—

“ When I first met Lynstock, he had recently been posted to command my regiment. The man was just crazy on chess, a game in which no one could touch him. He would get so objectionably cock-a-hoop and so nastily sarcastic when he won that I have seen men flatly refuse to try conclusions with him. Well, an officer came to us for a short while who was another chess lunatic, and a match for Lynstock. The two were ever playing or ever arguing ; and even when officially engaged

together, one or other of them would fly off at a tangent about shifting this knight, checking that queen, and so forth. The same during meals at mess ; and we were becoming perfectly sick of the subject, when the route came : that officer was mercifully shunted to another corps ; and as there was no other competent chess maniac available, we enjoyed a respite. Well, we started—by daily marches. The Colonel bore his deprivation for two days, but he could stand it no longer, so he ordered that a *naick's* or corporal's party should go on ahead overnight to the next camp, to hunt up any native chess-players that the village might afford, and have them in readiness against the C.O.'s arrival, with the regiment, the following forenoon. But it was no go : the corporal said that the villagers disclaimed all knowledge of chess, though he used strong language and threatened to burn the place down over their heads. I was with the Colonel when this announcement was made : he declared it to be all 'skittles' for a Mohammedan village to be without chess-players ; and it ended in his asking me to go and rout some out.

“ ‘Nab the priest, the schoolmaster, the butcher, or the barber, Champney,’ he cried, as I moved off. ‘The villains all play. Tell any story you like, and have them lugged here if they won't come willingly.’

“ I invaded the hamlet, and, ‘assuming a most truculent air,’ tackled the butcher—chopping up a sheep in his stall. I accused him of cheating the men, and insisted on his coming before the C.O. The poor devil swore he had not sold any meat to a single sepoy ; but I was inexorable, and made him accompany me. Then I spotted the

village barber—squatted under a tree, plying his vocation. I told him to come out of that, as the Colonel *sahib* required his tonsorial services. He forthwith dropped the native he was operating upon, rose, and followed me. I found Lynstock in his tent, with the chess-board on the camp table. On seeing my ‘captives,’ he bid them enter, and pointed to the chess-board, as much as to say that they knew its use, and denial would be futile. The trembling butcher admitted that he could play a little, while the wretched barber avowed a total ignorance of the game. Lynstock ordered the butcher to sit down and do his best—the barber to have second innings. Play commenced, and after a long, tough fight I’m hanged if the butcher didn’t win! The Colonel threw him five rupees, and then the barber was commanded to try his hand. He did, and—by jingo! the fellow won! He also received five rupees, and both were told that if they followed the regiment to the next halt, they might again be lucky. They agreed; and outside, the men thanked me most heartily, expressing their readiness to accompany us right away to our destination, elated at the prospect of earning money so easily.

“‘Wait,’ I said: ‘you may know better to-morrow.’

“‘But, sir,’ whispered the barber, ‘the *sahib* does not play over well.’

“‘Wait and see,’ I repeated.

“The morrow came, the march terminated: they played, and Lynstock beat them both hollow. He abused them roundly, gave them a rupee each, and, deeming them unworthy of his steel, had them turned out of camp—sadder and wiser men.”

## CHAPTER XVI

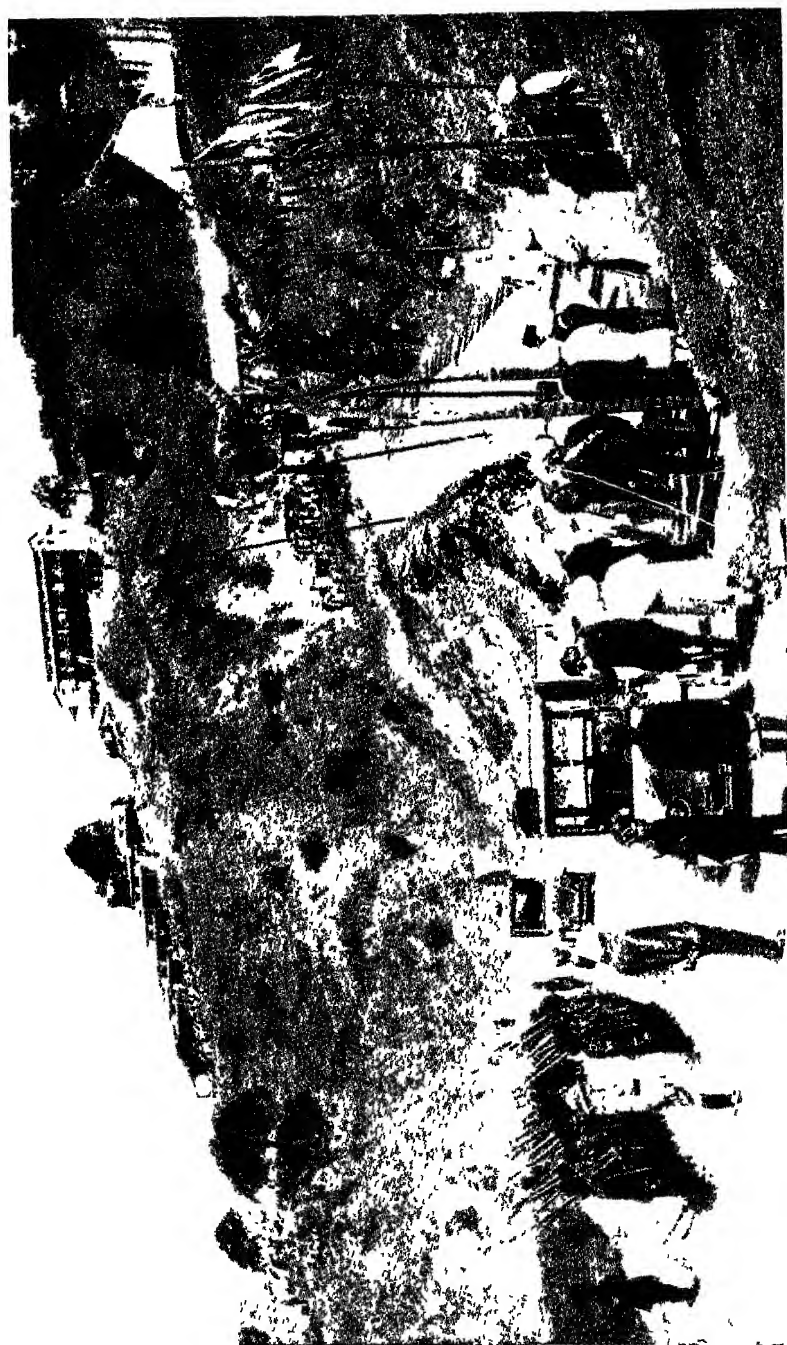
### THE CHARITABLE MAN

HE may be a *sahib* or no *sahib*, red coat or black coat, well off or badly off, but oftener the latter. His charity is not signalised by ostentatious almsgiving in the general sense—such as feeding, doctoring the poorer natives, or district-visiting among the soldiery and humbler Europeans: the clergy are obliged to—and the goody-goodies think it fine to go in for all that sort of thing. There is a certain *éclat* attaching to both the above forms of philanthropy, and the workers bask in the effulgence thereof. The true Charitable Man, however, takes heed not to do his alms before men, to be seen of them. He does not sound a trumpet before him, that he may have glory of men; but when he does an alms he lets not his left hand know what his right hand is doing. He works in secret, so that his Father who sees him in secret shall reward him openly.

Ossett, D.P.W. District Engineer, is a *sahib*, a bachelor of forty, in the good graces of all, but somewhat of an enigma to those unacquainted with his inner nature. While out on tour, he came across Gullivar, a young State Railway engineer, building a bridge. Ossett did not know Gullivar personally, nor had he anything to do with him professionally; however, after the manner of our people casually meeting in the wilds, Ossett left his horse on the bank and joined Gullivar in







THE OPENING OF DHARAMPORE SANATORIUM.

the dry, sandy river-bed. Though Ossett was not a railway engineer, he possessed a sufficient insight of the art to detect at a glance a grave constructional error in the work, so palpable that the first inspecting officer would spot it at once. Instead of making a parade of his discovery in the presence of the European and native subordinates who stood around, he led Gullivar aside, kindly pointed out his mistake, and advising him to correct it, rode away. Gullivar had the good sense to take the hint, and immediately rectified the error which—fortunately for him—had not gone too far. Later on, he confidentially mentioned the incident to his chief, who told him to thank his stars that Ossett had put him right; otherwise there would have been serious trouble. The grateful young fellow sang loudly in praise of Ossett, who, when he returned from tour, was asked what he had found wrong at the bridge.

“Oh, nothing much,” replied he indifferently, annoyed to think the matter had got about. “It was really no business of mine, so the less said about it the better.”

“No business of his”?—perhaps so; but had he not stepped in, those piers would have had to be pulled down and built afresh.

During some card-playing at the mess one night a dispute arose, and high words followed, culminating in fisticuffs, in which Erith, a sub, floored a senior officer, Major Clarind of the same regiment. Erith was placed in arrest, and matters looked decidedly cerulean for the hot-headed young idiot. Ossett heard of the fracas the following day: he knew both men, and rather liked them; so he set himself to see if he could not patch up

the affair, and thus save Erith from the grave consequences of his rash conduct. First walking across to Clarind's, and bringing all his persuasive rhetoric to bear, he obtained the Major's promise to let the matter drop provided the sub apologised, owned to his losses—some two hundred rupees—and paid them. Ossett then went to Erith, told him of Clarind's concession, which, if he met half-way, he—Ossett—would go and endeavour to make all right with the Colonel.

"I'll apologise like a shot, if only to get me out of this confounded scrape," replied Erith. "And I thank you awfully, Ossett, for bothering yourself about me; but as for paying up—on the nail, to tell you the truth, I haven't a stiver to my name."

"How, then, did you intend settling the debt?"

"By borrowing from a *sowcar* (native money-lender), if I get out of this mess; but of course, if I'm told to go, they'll have to whistle for their money."

"Well, keep your pecker up," whispered Ossett, rising to leave. "I dare say we shall manage it somehow. In the meantime, should any fellows look in, do not say that I have been here. Do you promise?"

The undertaking given, Ossett proceeded to the Colonel's bungalow, and, asking for a private interview, made known his object, repeated what the others had said, and spoke so feelingly on behalf of Erith that the C.O. consented to quash the matter if Ossett could bring the men together, but that Erith must tender an unqualified apology, and, for his own sake, pay his debts, though where he would raise the money from he did not know.

Saying no more, Ossett hurried home, took currency notes for two hundred rupees, and, returning to Erith, insisted on his accepting the sum as a loan, repayable at his convenience, and writing the apology to Clarind. This, with the notes and a line in explanation, he sent to the Major, who at once came over, and the two men shook hands; then Clarind went to the Colonel, and begged him to take no further action, as Erith had made a full *amende honorable*. The Colonel agreeing, Erith was released from arrest, and the incident fell into oblivion, for all concerned in it kept faith. Ossett, for his own glorification, might have shown the hand he had in it; but, needless to say, he did not.

When Mrs. Hernhill, the Collector's wife, dismissed her English nursemaid, Sarah Stump, for falling foul of a certain artillery-man named Bootle, the lady summarily paid the girl up, gave her her expenses via Bombay to London, and ordered her to clear out, bag and baggage. Of course, Sarah had no legal lien on that gunner, nor did that gunner harbour any serious intentions towards his victim, so she could not claim his protection; therefore, when the storm broke, Stump took refuge in the travellers' bungalow, which stood in the compound next to Ossett's. Seeing lights, and coolies carrying boxes, etc., in there late at night, he sent over to inquire who had arrived; and when his messenger returned to report that it was no traveller, but the Collector's European maid, with her traps, our Charitable Man smelt a rat, for he in common with others had marked Sarah Stump's penchant for the gunner. He went across to her, and heard the whole story; and while sobbingly unbosoming herself, owing to her sin, she almost

brought tears to Ossett's eyes. She told him that she dare not go home; that she was in a certain condition, and could not face her parents; so she had no alternative but to remain in India and "dree her weird." Bidding the poor girl be of good heart, and assuring her that he would do his best, Ossett returned to his bungalow; and early next morning he went over to the artillery barracks, and found Bombardier Bootle, who luckily was off duty. Calling the man out of earshot of his comrades, Ossett put the whole case before him, and appealing to the fellow's sense of honour, his better nature, strongly advised him to make the only reparation by marrying the girl. Bootle was so impressed by Ossett's eloquence that he applied that very day for permission to marry; fortunately, the "strength" allowed it, and before a fortnight had elapsed, Sarah Stump became the lawful wife of Bombardier Bootle.

It was by good works of this kind—not by doles, "Dorcassing," and such-like—that Ossett gained and deserved the title of a "Charitable Man."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE UNCHARITABLE MAN

IN direct antithesis to the noble-minded fellow portrayed in the preceding chapter is the Uncharitable Man, by no means an uncommon type among our people in India. Selfish to the core, the woes and troubles of others are like water on a duck's back to him; and unless his tastes or his interests are at stake, he will not open his purse nor move hand or foot to assist a fellow-creature. He jumps at conclusions, based entirely on his own narrow views, and you may reason with the man for hours together and yet fail in getting him to yield one iota, or own himself wrong by one jot or tittle.

Now, strange to say that while so devoid of the "greatest of all gifts," the Uncharitable Man is often pharisaically religious. He attends church regularly, and if set in authority, with subordinates under him, he expects those subordinates to be equally punctilious in their observance of divine worship. Yet when the Chaplain's book comes round—appealing for funds, say, to beautify the church with a stained glass window, or asking for contributions to alleviate some deserving case of misfortune—our friend merely initials his name in the list without paying a farthing; he will see the stained glass window or the deserving case of misfortune d——d first before he disgorges a red cent for either object. Government, he says, should

supply the one, and the Chaplain relieve the other from his poor-box. He may have a hobby—horse-racing, for instance ; and to promote a meeting at his station, he will come down handsomely with a substantial donation, and jog others to follow suit ; or if such sporting event takes place hundreds of miles up-country, he will obtain leave and attend. He may be clever at his work, having probably been specially coached for it at home ; but look you, if one of his locally taken-on assistants, who has not enjoyed these educational advantages, finds himself nonplussed by some professional technicality, does the Uncharitable Man show the poor devil a way out of the difficulty ? Not he ! He reports the unfortunate fellow as unworthy of his salt, and generally ends up by prematurely hounding him out of the Service, and forcing him to retire on a miserable pension—the more miserable should he be burdened with a family.

The Uncharitable Man, peradventure having sown his wild oats, is dead against naughtiness of any kind, be the offender a man gone wrong in money matters or taken to drink, or some fair one unmindful of her moral obligations.

While Hewron was superintendent in a certain scientific governmental department he had an assistant named Carthur. The former was a specialist in his work, for he had passed first of his batch out of the training college at home. The latter had received no such elaborate preparation : an older man, he joined in India—when the department was more in its infancy ; so his knowledge of his duties partook somewhat of the superficial and self-acquired. Needless to say that with all his educational superiority Hewron soon jumped over



the heads of the locally appointed men—Carthur included. Well, shortly after Hewron had been created superintendent, some rather intricate formulæ came into use, necessitating a familiarity with higher mathematics, a subject in which Carthur was by no means well up; so he went straight to his chief, frankly explained his difficulty, and asked to be shown how to handle those formulæ. It would not have taken Hewron five minutes to comply with the request, but he declined to do so—on principle, he said—and handed up poor Carthur as incompetent, resulting in his becoming a marked man. His annual increase of pay was stopped, and, losing heart, he applied for retirement many years before his time, and was shunted on a half-pension. Hewron plumed himself on doing Government a service for having thus rid them of one of their “bad bargains” in the person of Carthur.

Major Rygait, a bachelor, commanding an outpost detachment of native infantry, had a Captain Fillian, a married man, among his four officers. Mrs. Fillian, an attractive woman without children, ought by rights to have remained at headquarters, but she managed to obtain permission to accompany her husband. The couple occupied the only habitable bungalow in the place, and at the lady’s suggestion the officers transferred their mess to the Fillians’ house, in preference to the hot tent. Before proceeding further, it must be mentioned that the Major possessed ample private means, whereas the Fillians had no more than a captain’s pay to live upon. Rygait admired Mrs. Fillian in a strictly proper way—he was no Lothario; while she, on her part, had nothing of the fast or flirty in her—less so in connection with

Rygait, who did not lean towards lady-killing. Still, he was their "boss," and for policy's sake the poor girl tried to make herself agreeable to him. This touched the man's vanity, but not his heart, either for good or evil. He passed most of his leisure with her, and though he made no return of the kind, he complacently accepted all sorts of little attentions from her, which, while perhaps open to misconstruction by the thoughtless, were in truth quite harmless. Then one day Rygait was seized with cholera : for over a week he lay at death's door, and it took him six more weeks to gain convalescence. Mrs. Fillian's devotion to the man was simply heroic. Careless of contracting the malady herself, she literally nursed him night and day, removing him from his tent to her house ; she and her husband giving up the only bedroom, and shaking down anywhere. As the detachment medico affirmed, he could never have pulled the Major through without Mrs. Fillian's invaluable help. Rygait thanked her occasionally during the course of his illness, but no more. She thought that, when quite well, he would make some better acknowledgment of her services. However, she was disappointed : the Major regained his strength, and in due time resumed command, but without evincing his gratitude either by word or deed.

While matters were thus, Mrs. Fillian received bad news from home. Certain money difficulties into which her parents had fallen required the sum of a hundred pounds to meet—could their dear daughter send the money, and save them from ruin ? The Fillians were totally powerless ; they were already in debt, and it was only lately that Prince & Prince, the army agents, had refused Fillian an

advance of a beggarly three hundred rupees. So the poor woman in her extremity resolved to appeal to Rygait : he was under heavy obligations to her, and surely he would jump at such an opportunity for requiting her ! She went to him, fell on her knees by his chair, described her dilemma, put her request, and, carried away by her feelings, she drooped her head on his shoulder, sobbing pitifully.

“Look here,” exclaimed the man with heart of stone, rudely shaking her off by abruptly rising to his feet, “this won’t do, trying your infernal woman’s wiles on me—besides which, I’m not your banker ! Tell Fillian if he can’t get the money elsewhere, to apply to a *sowcar* (native money-lender) ; he’ll give it readily enough, provided you’re prepared to stand the heavy interest. Now, if you cannot stop this snivelling and behave yourself, you had better be off ! ”

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE GLOBE-TROTTER

HE is irritating—to use a mild term: his very verdancy on matters Indian gets on the nerves, and we wish he would not come pottering round, primed with a superficial book-knowledge of the country, and a hankering to improve his lore, be it political, polemical, or merely to see the world.

When the Globe-Trotter is a man of money, or has anything to do with the Home Legislature, there ensues a shaking-up among those of us who are likely to encounter him: for he generally lands at Bombay, and travels under the ægis of one of its tourist agents, who maps out his itinerary beforehand, and keeps it no secret; so we are duly warned by something like the following announcements in the Bombay papers:—

“We hear that Mr. Charivari Bouvery, the well-known mill-owner of Kidlandshire, will shortly arrive here on a pleasure trip. He is bringing his own motor-car, and will visit Poonah, Hyderabad, Goa, the Mysore Province, Trichinopoly, Pondicherry, and Madras, embarking at that port for home via San Francisco.”

Or—

“We have it on good authority that Mr. Gardiner Baw, M.P. for South Woodheadshire, intends to spend the forthcoming recess in a tour of this country. His chief object, we believe, is to acquaint himself with existing conditions touching on the

spirit of discontent now prevailing among our Indian fellow-subjects."

However described, however heralded, so long as he is a "big bug," his advent is regarded with mixed feelings: the men consider it a nuisance; the women as an excuse for high-jinks and entertaining. When Globe-Trotter Mr. Theophilus Lovegame is expected at a certain little up-country station, where he breaks his journey to view its famous temple, the exotic community talk the matter over at their first gathering after the news is received:—

PUDDLER (chief civilian, accosting group at Club). I say, I expect this M.P. fellow, Lovegame, is a bit of a bounder, as most of his *jâth* (species) are.

GURDY (executive engineer). Why, what makes you think so, Puddler?

PUDDLER. Well, I heard again from him to-day, forwarding a letter of introduction from the Governor's private secretary, asking me to put the bearer up. He is keen on temples—what he calls "Dravidian ornate architecture"; but he is keener on the blessed natives, you bet—"the interesting sons of the soil," as he terms them. Evidently he is on the ferret—one of your learn-all-about-them-in-a-week, don't you know. I am sorry now I replied agreeing to receive the man.

MISS GURDY (engineer's sister, seeing possible chance for herself). Oh, Mr. Puddler! Whatever this Mr. Lovegame's ideas or object may be, we must be civil to him.

PUDDLER (grumblingly). Suppose so. Nevertheless, I have no liking for these griffins to the country, coming here to turn the natives' heads—as if they were not getting bumptious enough already. Then footling round—looking at temples and things!

MRS. PUDDLER (reassuringly). Oh, never mind! I dare say he'll be rather nice. Of course I shall give him a big dinner, to which all of you must come; but who will take him to the temple?

PUDDLER. I can't, that's certain. I've not quite recovered from my last bout of fever; besides, I'm sick of the confounded temple.

MRS. NORMAN-SAXONDALE (Chaplain's wife). Major O'Praty, then you go!

O'PRATY (Major, I.M.S. Civil Surgeon). Sure and I will—though he may turn out a dry old stick, like the generality of them.

Lovegame duly arrived: the Puddlers put him up, and Mrs. P. gave her big dinner the same evening. While reticent on the native question just then, the tourist was all agog about the temple, expressing himself in pompous, grandiloquent language—such as he, no doubt, gave vent to in the "House"; and in the same terms he condescendingly accepted O'Praty's offer to drive him over in the morning. The doctor owned a fast-trotting mare: the distance was five miles of good road; so if they started at dawn, they could be back by eleven o'clock for breakfast, giving the Member several hours to fill himself out with "temple."

"Er—my guide-book furnishes a glowing description of your temple," said Lovegame to O'Praty across the table. "Er—in addition to my—er—long-felt desire to study the ancient order of architecture of these buildings, I have—er—always associated them with the sacred wild ape which the inhabitants of this country revere as an incarnation of one of their—er—chief deities. I hope, therefore, we shall see some of these holy apes."

"Do you care for monkeys—particularly?" queried the Irishman, after exchanging a furtive glance of apprehension with Puddler—for, as a matter of fact, there were no monkeys at the temple.

"Yes, above all the fauna of this—er—romantic land. I have long been most anxious to observe the simian tribes in their own homes."

"You've seen them in England, surely!" exclaimed O'Praty, winking surreptitiously at Puddler.

"Yes, but only in captivity, with street organs, chained, confined, and clothed. My—er—greatest wish is to behold the animals at large, and—er—in *puris naturalibus*."

Obviously, then, thought the doctor, it would not do to altogether disappoint the M.P. in the matter of monkeys; so after dinner, while the big man was otherwise engaged, O'Praty—who owned a pet monkeyess named Lutchmi—decided to pack her off that night to the temple. Calling one of Puddler's peons, the medico ordered him in his broken vernacular to hie over to his house and tell his orderly to start at once, with the dog-boy carrying Lutchmi, for the temple, and sleep there as best they could. In the morning, directly they saw him—O'Praty—and the strange gentleman driving up the hill, they were to denude Lutchmi of her clothing, her ear-rings, and, without showing themselves, stealthily let her out into the open. The peon promised to obey, and went off.

The next morning O'Praty tooled the tourist to the temple. All went well; but instead of at once starting on the sculpturings of the building, Lovegame expressed loud disappointment at the non-appearance of any simians. But they had scarcely alighted when a monkey cantered out of

one of the side cloisters, and began climbing a tree—a monkey dressed in knee-breeches, a zouave jacket, and brass rings in the ears! That idiot peon had botched his instructions!

“Ah, there is a monkey at last!” remarked Lovegame. “But how is it that the—er—animal is not only clothed, but adorned with ear-rings?”

Inwardly cursing that peon, and finding himself “in a hat,” O’Praty, after a moment’s deliberation, resolved to brazen it out, relying on the M.P.’s ignorance to carry him through.

“Oh,” said he gravely, “that’s easily explained. Sure, the monkeys of these parts have become so influenced by Western civilisation that they run the natives very close in adapting themselves to our example. That brute, for instance, must have picked up an old coat or something.”

“Er—and fashioned therefrom the garments it is now wearing?”

“Begorra! now you mention it, I should not be surprised.”

“And—er—the ear-rings?”

“Picked them up too, out of some funeral pyre—when the ashes had got cold and the mourners cleared off. You know the old saying, ‘Monkeys copy their masters.’”

“Look here, my boy,” rejoined Lovegame, after a stare of astoundment at the other’s assurance, and suddenly dropping from his hitherto high-flown language into forcible colloquial, “do you see any green in my eye? Irishman though you are, you can’t work the ‘poppy-cock racket’ over me. That’s no more a wild monkey than I am, and you’re trying to pull my leg; so no more of your blarney! Come, let us inspect the temple.”



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE LOAFER

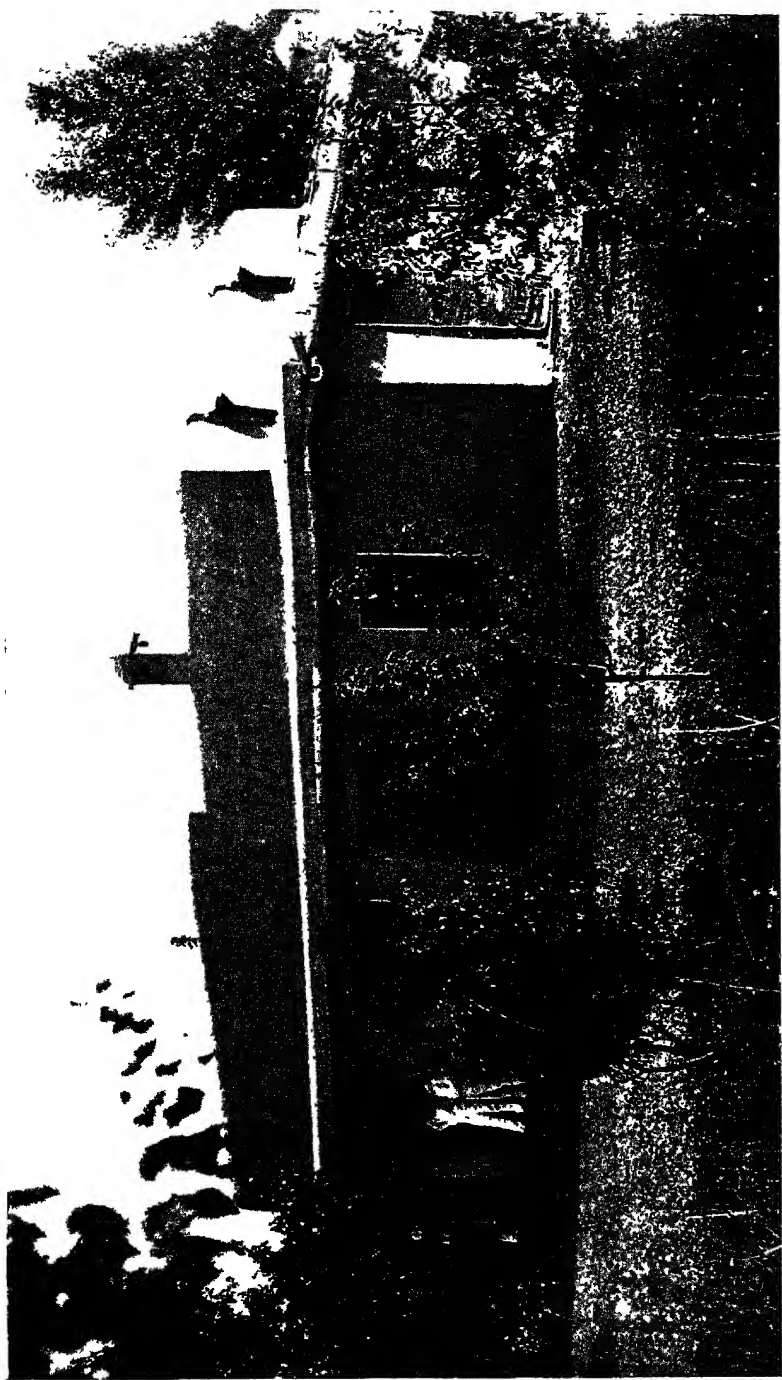
THERE are two kinds of European Loafers in India : the stone-broke vagrant proper, and the “ Skulker,” who lives on his wife’s honest, hardly acquired earnings, and won’t work—no, not even to pay for his tobacco.

The Loafer of the first-named type comes from anywhere—ragged, unshaven, unutterably filthy, and wearing that hunted, hang-dog expression so characteristic of the fraternity all the world over. He trudges from station to station, sleeping *en route* in the verandas of travellers’ bungalows, as he has no money to pay for a room, and wheedling or terrorising the villagers into supplying him with food ; for though here—in England—the tramp fears the police, out yonder it is the reverse, because the Indian Bobby regards the white Loafer as one of the ruling race, and to be treated accordingly. He is generally of the lower middle or labouring class ; sometimes a *ci-devant* soldier, sailor, or man-servant ; occasionally a skilled artisan, or a whilom subordinate Government official ; and rarer still, a *sahib* or gentleman, born and bred. No matter the fellow’s social extraction, his lot out in India is pitiable. He is one to a million natives, who as a body fear and shun him ; he is one to a thousand whites, a small proportion of whom are labouring men likely to hold out a helping hand to a fellow-worker in distress. True, the British Tommy is seldom appealed to in

vain. If the Loafer goes to the barrack square, and over the breast-high wall asks the inmates for aid, they—if bachelors—make up a purse of coppers among them and hand it to the poor devil; or if a married sergeant is accosted, he tells the vagrant to come round to the family quarters, when he dare says “the missus’ll give yer a meal o’ vittles.” The hungry one goes round as directed; the sergeant has got there before him, and given the tip to his “missus,” who presently comes out with a piled plate of eatables, which she empties over the wall into the wai’s tattered kerchief. The soldier, however, is not commonly available, as cantonments with white troops are comparatively few and far between.

What brings the Loafer down to this ignominious level? What converts him into a shred of white flotsam tossing about on the dark ocean of Ind? In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the cause is drink, that great curse which would be more aptly styled “the sin that so easily besets us,” than that other transgression it particularly refers to.

Fatuously careless of the future, the Loafer, after repeated dismissals, and losing all hope, literally takes to the road, with some station or cantonment, perhaps a hundred miles off, as his objective, where he is not known, and where he hopes to earn charity if not work. He knows that there are travellers’ bungalows along the route, in the verandas of which he can shelter for the night: but in the meanwhile he is footsore, hungry, and penniless; the fierce Indian sun beats pitilessly upon him; the day is not half spent, and the bungalow—his goal for that day—is miles ahead. Presently, he overtakes a creeping string of empty covered bullock-carts; without leave or licence he climbs into the hindmost, and throws



A TRAVELLERS' BUNGALOW—SCINDE.



himself on the straw. The startled driver pulls up and shouts to his fellows; the string halts; the carters alight, congregate round the tail cart, and jabber their remonstrances in vernacular. Their vociferations are so much double-Dutch to the Loafer, but he guesses what they are saying, and as he has no intention of quitting his cosy nest, he makes conciliatory gestures at the crowd, and perhaps gives them a *salaam* (salute). Natives are all more or less charitable; so the carters, understanding the white man's destitute state, let him be. Others may not be so easily pacified; they start threatening the intruder, who thereupon, assuming a fierce air, consigns them all to the devil in broad English, and makes as if to jump on the top of them. Quite enough: he is a *vellay-kurran* (white man), and what trouble might not befall them if they ejected him by force? So they let him be, and say nothing when, abreast of the travellers' bungalow, the vagrant vacates the cart without bestowing a *sou* for his lift. Now he goes to the hamlet on the opposite side of the road; the timid villagers stare apprehensively as the white man stands there, pointing with one hand to his mouth and significantly slapping the other on his stomach. The yokels fathom the meaning of these antics; so, the sooner to propitiate and get rid of the formidable stranger, they bring out one plantain leaf containing boiled rice, and a smaller leaf—cup-fashioned—filled with vegetable or *dhall* (lentil) curry. The recipient *salaams*, walks off with the provender to the bungalow veranda, deposits his dinner there, and, totally ignoring the old sepoy or caretaker, goes to the well, draws the leather bucket full of water, detaches that bucket from the rope, carries it into the veranda, and sitting down

cross-legged, devours the food—using his hands in lieu of spoon and fork. Then, though his hunger is appeased, what would he not give for either a drop of “something short” or a smoke? The first is beyond him, for he has no money to pay for a “go” of arrack; the natives will bestow food in the name of charity, but not spirits. But the smoke? He sees the fag end of a dried tobacco leaf peeping from the old sepoy’s turban; he signs to the ancient to hand it over. The ancient indignantly shakes his head, whereupon the Loafer reaches out, snatches the leaf from its place, and with a grin of satisfaction proceeds to roll it into the semblance of a cigar, which he lights with a sulphur match that he has in his pocket.

At his journey’s end, the Loafer first visits the Chaplain. His reverence assists applicant from the poor-box, and probably gives him a chit to some charitably disposed lady resident, who may present the bearer with a few rupees, which that bearer promptly lays out in getting royally drunk down in the bazaar, to end in being taken by the European police sergeant before the cantonment magistrate, who orders the delinquent to be deported by rail to the Presidency workhouse, or whatever answers for that much-dreaded refuge for the destitute.

The second variety of Loafer—*i.e.* the “Skulker”—is a beast. Generally a great hulking, able-bodied fellow, he is found at big stations, where he may have had employment after employment, to be “kicked out” of each for incorrigible idleness. His better-half (apt term!), with an eye to ways and means,—for she has a young family,—starts a laundry, or a poultry-yard, or a small farm; but in none of which her “lord” takes interest. Being a nice

woman, and of good repute, she secures the support of the local gentry, who pity her and admire her pluck. The fellow dresses well, swanks about the station, appears at the Band or other places open to the general public, and is perfectly impervious to the reproving glances cast at him; for all know that while he apes the gentleman-at-large, his wife is moiling and toiling to keep the home together. Poor woman! she does not complain. She remembers her vows taken at the altar, and hugs her skeleton in silence; but one day, when the news spreads that her *flâneur* of a husband has had a fatal sunstroke, everyone—rather than condole—feels inclined to congratulate the widow on her happy release.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE GOOD-ALL-ROUND MAN

WE heard that Captain Chiffny was posted to one of the Indian infantry corps in garrison on expiry of furlough, but no one knew of his actual arrival till he evidenced himself in a manner that at once made a big mark in his favour. All Society was at the gymkhana pavilion witnessing a cricket match—the rubber game—'twixt our eleven and a visiting team from a neighbouring station. Each had scored a win earlier in the season, and now, in this match we were about taking our second knock—the final innings—with 353 runs to tie. We had just had tiffin, in which tinned-lobster salad had prominently figured. All felt bound to patronise that tasty but indigestible delicacy ; for while we were fielding, it had been prepared by some of our ladies—as a pleasant surprise, they called it—for us. Well, everyone went in for the salad, washing it down with shandygaff or claret cup—concoctions which, though by no means heady, any doctor will tell you are not good mixtures to partake of, especially in conjunction with lobster salad. Unfortunately, Dorbett, our batting mainstay, had eaten too freely of that salad, imbibed too deeply of those drinks, and was “ taken bad,” resulting in his being obliged to go home. Thus thrown on the horns of a dilemma, Hankshore, our captain, beat round in vain among the spectators for a suitable sub : several were willing to stand, but they were poor players,



and not in the premier team. While we grumbled and fumed over this unlooked-for set-back, a stranger entered the pavilion and said, "Halloa ! something wrong ? What's the difficulty ? "

" We've lost our best bat, and there's no one to replace him," replied Hankshore, sourly glancing at the newcomer. " He ate too much lobster salad, and had to hook it, leaving us to get 353 without him ! Confound the salad ! " he added, growling below his breath.

" Hang the salad ! If you are in want of a sub, I'll do my best for you."

" Are you a good bat, though ? "

" That I leave for you to judge. I never blow my own trumpet."

" All right, then ; come along in with me."

" Here, I say ! " bawled the scorer, " may I ask your name ? "

" ' Sub ' will do for the present," chuckled the stranger, legging it for the pitch.

Briefly told, that " sub " stuck in the whole innings ; not only carrying his bat for 185, but materially conducing to our winning the match by 22 runs, and the rubber. He was welcomed with acclamation, patted on the back, and all the rest of it.

" Look here," said Hankshore, when the tumult subsided, " who are you at all ? "

" Chiffny, -th Coromandels. Arrived to-day ; heard of this match, so thought I'd come and look on."

" Well, you've turned out a godsend for us, and we thank you awfully. Hope you'll join the cricket club."

" Like a shot ! I'm very fond of the game."

Chiffny soon became a *persona grata* with everyone. Always full of spirits, unassuming, never showing off, yet ready to turn his hand to anything that fell in his way, it really seemed as if chance furnished him with opportunities one on top of the other for making use of his versatile talents.

While still new to the place, driving home from mess late one night, he took a wrong turning, and in a low quarter of the native town came upon a solitary British infantryman, drunk as a fiddler, and beset by half a dozen pariahs who were hitting at him with sticks. To pull up, jump down, floor the cowards right and left, seize the Tommy, hoist him on to the back seat of his dogcart, with the horse-keeper holding him there, was the work of so many seconds. Then, proceeding to the barrack main gate, he called for the N.C.O. commanding the guard, handed him the inebriate, with a whispered hint not to report him or say how he had come home, and without divulging his name the Good Samaritan drove off.

Subsequently, when he had got to know people, humanly speaking he was probably the means of saving a lady from fearful injury, if not death—a Mrs. Friern, one of our Society leaders, a great horsewoman, and rather notorious for an ungovernable temper, which had more than once landed her in hot water. It was garrison holiday, and Chiffny, who did not believe in “Europe mornings,”—*i.e.* lying late in bed whenever possible,—started for a constitutional. On emerging from the side road on to the mall, there, just in front of him, he saw Mrs. Friern, dismounted, holding her horse by the bridle twisted round her left arm, and grasping a whip in her right hand she thrashed the trembling

animal across the head and face. The lady presented a sorry, undignified figure. She was purple with rage; her hat had fallen off, her hair come down. She was panting from her exertions; while a knot of natives looked on with huge appreciation on their grinning countenances. Shocked at the sight, Chiffny sprang forward just in time to prevent the horse from galloping off—with the woman in tow; for the poor beast was unable to bear the punishment any longer. Adroitly catching the bridle, and speaking soothingly to him, Chiffny reduced the steed to quiescence and released the lady.

“Mrs. Friern,” he muttered, “I’m sorry to see this. What happened?”

“He shied at a boy with a basket!” she gasped. “He has taken to shying lately, so I was determined to give it to him the very next time! The brute—making an exposé of me like this!”

He realised the futility of reasoning—of telling her that kindness pays better than cruelty, even to a dumb creature. Saying no more, therefore, he adjusted the bridle, saw to the girths, took her shapely foot in his hand, launched her into the saddle, and gravely lifted his hat as the lady wheeled and rode away.

One stifling Sunday during church service, as the Chaplain gave out the hymns, Miss Scaraby, the organist, suddenly fainted, probably from the heat. There were plenty of young men handy who promptly arose, picked up the lady, and carried her forth—not to bury her, but over to her house close by. However, no one came forward as a substitute to preside at the organ. Of course there were players among the ladies; but it was either too

hot, or they did not care to offer themselves. Anyhow, the musical portion of the ceremony was bidding fair to fall through when Chiffny stepped quietly from his seat, and made that organ speak as it had never been known to speak before—right up to the conclusion of the service.

Automobilism was in comparative infancy out there when Mrs. Pitland, our General's wife, imported a motor-car. The machine, however, soon got out of order. The nearest "shop" was at Bombay; the chauffeur who came out with the car had just been shipped back to England—ill; and Mrs. Pitland was in despair till someone suggested Chiffny. She appealed to him; and he, who had studied motors and motoring during his late home-furlough, succeeded in rectifying the defect, much to the fair owner's satisfaction and the admiration of all in the station, who regarded Chiffny as a veritable master-of-all-trades and well deserving the title of our "Good-all-Round Man."

## PART II

### CHAPTER I

#### THE FAST MARRIED WOMAN

THE Fast Married Woman of exotic Ind is not a fallen angel. Did she become one, the husband would make a fuss; Society be scandalised; the goody-goodies start croaking; and, among them all, the fair sinner would be cast forth, and bundled home to her people in dire disgrace. No: however morally lax, however much imbued with flirtatious instincts, our Fast Married Woman stops just short of the Rubicon. She may lave her hands in the slack water of that mystic stream; but to plunge body and soul into its tide—not she! She is not deterred so much by qualms of conscience as by motives of worldly prudence: she knows the penalty awaiting her on the farther bank; she has no desire to be branded with the Scarlet Letter, and ejected from the bosom of Society. Why should she commit herself beyond recall? She has her husband under her thumb, as is general in such cases; he believes in her rectitude—despite the occasional twinges her conduct may cause him; and so long as she observes a prudent decorum he is content.

The Fast Married Woman, though no “chicken,” and having no “chickens” of her own to sober her mind, must be attractive. Mrs. Ormskirk is pos-

sessed of all those physical fascinations that tell on the preponderance of the opposite sex. She is more handsome than pretty, and presents in herself an aggregation of Nature's beauty-curves that catch the eye in every movement. She is clever at sports and games—from billiards and boating to badminton and butt-firing, in any of which she prefers men opponents; for she treats her sisters with a cool contempt, knowing that, while they disapprove of her doings, every petticoat of the lot envies her her swarm of male dangles, which alone outnumbers the votaries of a dozen of them put together. When out riding of a morning, she is never accompanied by her husband, but soon gathers a pack of horsemen in her train, and rattles about the cantonment, takes a breather round the racecourse, and puts the finishing touch by galloping with her escort full-split down the mall—to the consternation of more sober folks, whether on foot or in the saddle. At the Band of an evening she rides about among the carriages, nods and winks here, or frowns and tilts her nose there; chaffs some old buffer—offers to teach him the last terpsichorean eccentricity imported from the States; and finally, when the assemblage disperses, and there is half an hour yet before dinner, she dismounts, and with some favoured friend lounges on a garden seat, smoking cigarettes and talking nonsensicalities till it is time to go home—the man probably stealing a kiss as he assists her into her saddle.

What has brought her down to the brink of the bottomless pit? Simply the pernicious effect of that atmosphere of flattery and adulation in which she lives, moves, and has her being, aided by the ennui inseparable from life in India, which, except

at the very large stations, is so devoid of those occupations and diversions so dear to the mind of woman—to be enjoyed to the full in this country, but wanting out there; a life of humdrum insipidity, and tempting her ill-balanced soul to throw propriety to the winds, kick over the traces, and become the wanton she is.

“*Principiis obsta*,” etc., as Ovid says: a maxim that Mrs. Ormskirk did not lay to heart. The mischief began shortly after her arrival in India as a girl-bride of twenty, and men gathered at the shrine of the new divinity like wasps round a honey-pot. Finding her unconventional, and gauging her moral shallowness thereby, they commenced their attack with the usual adulatory weapons, and to which she was not proof. For instance, one praised her feet—whereat she exposed them more than hitherto. Another—at a dance—reproached her for hiding her light under a bushel: she was not at a loss for an interpretation, and acted on the hint by adopting the *décolleté*, to the huge approval of her adorers—fellows “clothed with blue (and red and black), captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men.” Gradually they advance their saps, hoping to carry the fortress by a *coup de main*; but finding the inner circumvallation impregnable, they resort to the *pis aller* of folly and philandering with her—attentions which she takes kindly to so long as certain limits of freedom are observed. Thus has Mrs. Ormskirk developed into a Fast Married Woman.

For a short period Major Ormskirk did duty with the regiment garrisoning Singapore. Forewarned of the difficulty of obtaining good *ayahs* (lady’s-maids) at the settlement, Mrs. Ormskirk—

then in the zenith of her fast career—took with her from India an English-speaking native convert named Kitty, recommended by the Mission folks as a pattern of truth and honesty. Singapore Society did not at all suit the lady : it was small and cliquy, mostly sobered married people, while the few bachelors appeared impervious to Mrs. Ormskirk's manifold attractions. For some time all went well between mistress and maid, till one day—when the Ormskirks gave a dinner-party. The guests all arrived ; the dinner-hour came—and went. Mrs. Ormskirk stole out to the back, called Kitty, and told her to ascertain the cause of the delay. The girl ran across to the cook-house, and returning said that the cook having been taken ill, the butler was seeing to things ; hence the wait. Suspecting the *ayah* of prevarication, Mrs. Ormskirk went over to the cook-house to investigate, and found the cook lying under the kitchen table—dead drunk. Next morning the lady brought Kitty to task for misrepresenting facts. “ You must never tell lies under *any* circumstances, Kitty—not even to screen a fellow-servant or anyone else,” she observed severely. “ The cook was intoxicated, and you should have said so. Supposing *I* got drunk, and any person asked for me, I should expect you to tell the absolute truth ; so never lie to me again, or I shall be very angry.”

Shortly afterwards, Kitty had an opportunity of putting these precepts into practice.

Mrs. Ormskirk loved mangosteens, for which the Straits Settlements are noted. Her method of enjoying the fruit was to recline in her large bath, full of water, with a plate of mangosteens on a stool within reach of her hand. On the occasion in



question, it was the hot weather, and Ormskirk happened to be over at the mess-house. The lady, after sitting in her drawing-room prepared to receive visitors till two o'clock, the usual calling-hour limit, decided to take her siesta in the bath, eating mangosteens. She summoned the *ayah*.

"Is my bath filled, Kitty?"

"Yes, ma'am, and I done put mangoshteen on ishtool."

Mrs. Ormskirk retired, in no very gracious mood, for she was aware that the Naval Squadron had come in that morning, and she quite looked for a visit from Pennymoney, one of the captains whom she had met in Bombay, and who was a great admirer of hers. Well, while in the middle of her alfresco feast, a carriage rattled up to the portico. She heard the orderly bawl for the *ayah*; she heard a murmuring of voices; the carriage drove away, and then came Kitty's knock at the bathroom door.

"Cards, please, ma'am."

Mrs. Ormskirk stepped out of the bath, and from behind the door reached for the cards, which read, "Commander F. K. Pennymoney, R.N."

Grinding her teeth with vexation, she inquired, "What did you say, Kitty?"

"I told that missus in bath, eating mangoshteen, ma'am, and that why cannot see gentleman."

It soon got all over the settlement—to be used as a catch-phrase by people wanting to excuse themselves: "I'm in my bath—eating mangosteens!"

## CHAPTER II

### THE STAID MARRIED WOMAN

THERE is no nonsense about her either way : nothing of the “ giddy goat ” order, to lead her in the direction of those thorns and thistles that would be hurtful to browse on. Yet, while not inclining towards the school of which Mrs. Ormskirk—figuring in the preceding chapter—is an exponent, she does not affect the ultra-puritan. She steers a middle course, turning neither to right nor left : the rocks of the one and the shoals of the other are on both bows, and equally to be avoided ; for she holds that the pretence of making long prayers, the pulling of long faces, the compassing of sea and land to gain one proselyte, the cleansing of the outside of the cup, and other tricks of a like nature peculiar to the hypocrite of all ages, bring her just as much into danger of hell fire as the emulating of Messalina in all but her actual criminality. If the Staid Married Woman is ugly, or otherwise repulsive, she is left severely alone, and enjoys perfect immunity from attack ; but in many cases she is quite as attractive as her thicker-skinned sister, only with this difference, that she does not make use of her charms as decoys for man’s spurious idolatry : she puts on the stopper at the very first attempt, not to the accompaniment of hysterics or fuss, but quietly, and in terms sufficiently unmistakable to dismiss the presumptuous Lothario with the proverbial flea in his ear. Others try their hand, only to be similarly

foiled. Her impregnability becomes known ; her would-be worshippers therefore give the lady up as a bad job, and transfer their attention to more propitious shrines.

Mrs. Rochdayl, though undoubtedly beautiful and captivating, starts with several advantages which help her in maintaining a *noli me tangere* attitude. Her mind is as sound as her body ; she has given three hostages to fortune ; and now, when after ten years of placid wedded life she comes to India, where the darts of the Wicked One assail her in right earnest, she withstands them, and devotes herself to her husband and children, despising her enemies and holding them at arm's length. Besides these domestic ties and influences, she has resources such as music and painting. Her husband's work, too, interests her, and whenever possible she puts aside all the attendant inconveniences, and accompanies him into the district, travelling with the children in a bullock-coach, and preparing a comfortable reception for her lord against his joining her at tent or rest-house. Her family, in fact, is her all in all, and she has no hankering for those pleasures and pastimes of a questionable nature—so peculiar to life in India. “ Her children rise up and call her blessed ; her husband also, and he praiseth her.”

While Mrs. Rochdayl discountenances aught of the fast, loose, or irreverent type, she has no admiration for the goody-goodies ; she sees through them, and knows that their ostentatious charity, their self-righteousness are practised for effect, so as to pose before the world as the salt of the earth, and to be called “ Rabbi ” by their fellow-men.

Though calm, cool-tempered, and usually diffident in forcing or even giving vent to her opinions,

Mrs. Rochdayl can “ fly out ” and “ show her claws ” at times, as the following incident will prove :—

Bogan, an engineer, a new arrival from the Madras Presidency, had called round, and amongst the invites that came pouring in he received one from Mrs. Rochdayl, asking him to dinner. Bogan, a jolly good fellow, had already established a reputation for being a really amusing raconteur ; so on this occasion, after dinner, and the music had come to a standstill, the hostess said, “ Tell us an anecdote, Mr. Bogan ; I hear you are primed with them.”

“ Indeed ! ” laughed the guest, ignorant of the lady’s somewhat strait-laced tendencies. “ Well, I do happen to have rather a good story in my mind, which I will gladly give you.”

Everyone became attention, and Bogan delivered himself of the following :—

“ Down south—as I dare say you have heard—our servants pick up a sort of English, from which you would infer that the coolie also knew something of our lingo—from the very fact of his contact with us. Not so, as a rule. I have often put the coolie through his repertoire of English ; and however limited it may be, he is always familiar with the one word ‘ d-mn.’ Asked how that particular epithet has caught on more than others of a politer significance, he explains that we use the word so frequently that he cannot help remembering it. On the other hand,—in South India, that is,—the first Tamil abusive term we learn is ‘ pytie,’ meaning idiot, fool, etc. It is hurled at the native on all occasions, whether he deserves it or not.

“ I was journeying the other day by road from Trevandrum to Tuticorin, and while halting at a





A SHOOTING PARTY.

rest-house, two other itinerants arrived—a coffee-planter named Ewebank and his wife, going in the opposite direction. As soon as we forgathered in the good old Anglo-Indian fashion, they told me that they were in great distress, for their servants had one after another succumbed to fever ; they had been left behind, and here the unfortunate couple were, with seven more stages to do, depending on the culinary services of the bullock-driver, who knew no more of cooking than concocting cock-tails. I seemed to have a number of followers : could I help them ?

“ I first gave them a good meal, and then thought of a certain native convert among my coolies named Abraham, who, my servants told me, knew something of cooking. I asked him if he would take service with the planter. He agreed. I handed him over. The Ewebanks overwhelmed me with thanks, and after an early dinner they proceeded on their journey, accompanied by Abraham.

“ To my surprise, a few days afterwards Abraham rejoined me farther on, averring that he could never serve such people as that coffee-planter and his wife.

“ ‘ Why ? ’ I asked in the vernacular. ‘ Did they ill-treat you ? ’

“ ‘ No, sir,’ replied the fellow ; ‘ but they are constantly abusing each other. The lady says “ d-mn ” to the gentleman, and the gentleman says “ pytie ” to the lady. The priest tells us to avoid those who use bad language, sir. If they abused me, never mind ; but for a European lady and gentleman to employ such words is too shocking, so I came back to you, sir.’

“ ‘ What did they quarrel about ? ’

“ ‘ That is just it, sir : there was no quarrelling. They spoke the bad words when chatting and talking together.’

“ This mystified me ; so subsequently, on returning to Trevandrum, I looked up the Ewebanks, and, with an eye to elucidation, told them Abraham’s story, when Lor’, how they chuckled !

“ ‘ It lies in a nutshell,’ laughed Mrs. Ewebank : ‘ my husband’s name is Daniel, and I habitually call him Dan.’

“ ‘ While my wife’s name is Piety,’ grinned the planter ; ‘ hence the analogy : Dan and Piety—D-mn and Pytie ! ’ ”

Everyone roared, but Bogan noticed that his hostess did not seem to see the joke ; and a fear that he had offended her was afterwards confirmed, for when bidding her good-night she whispered, “ I do not thank you for your story, Mr. Bogan ; indeed, I felt inclined to box your ears ! You should be ashamed of yourself ! ”



## CHAPTER III

### THE ATTACHED MISS

IN many a rakishly disposed man's life there comes a period when he sickens of aught that smacks of the hazardous so often conspicuous among our women in India, especially the married ones. It is when he contemplates matrimony that this nausea takes hold of him. However ardently he may have admired such sorceresses at one time, yet, when his mind is sobered, his heart implicated, he seriously considers the pros and cons of entering the Holy Estate, and he finds a legitimate object for his purer affections, then that which once proved so seductive becomes dust and ashes, bitter as Dead Sea fruit to his taste.

Thus was it with Redoak of the Cavalry. Till Miss Maud Lake appeared on the scene, that gallant sabreur had been a slave to the Fast Married Woman, specimens of whom are to be found in most Indian stations. But when Miss Lake joined her parents from home, he experienced the revulsion of feeling above referred to, and became desperately smitten. Colonel and Mrs. Lake did not object to Redoak. True, they were cognizant of his penchant for other men's property, and had heard sundry items of "gup" that did not redound to the young fellow's credit; but when he grew so *épris* with their daughter, and entirely dropped Mrs. This and Mrs. That, they judged him to have turned over a new leaf, and that he meant honestly by the fair Maud.

Moreover, knowing him to be of good family, though poor, and that he was otherwise steady, they were inclined to encourage him as a suitor for their daughter's hand—because one of the strongest Anglo-Indian tenets is “to marry your girls off as fast as possible.” Miss Lake, however, was wiser in her generation. While entertaining a respect for “blood,” she fully understood the significance of limited means; for beyond a colonel's pay, her parents had nothing in the shape of income. Consequently, she would be a tocherless bride; so it behoved her to look out for a man with money, as she had been imported to India with the express purpose of getting “settled in life.” Redoak, therefore, without being actually dismissed by the young lady, received very little countenance from her, and the only comfort the poor fellow derived was from the fact that Miss Lake favoured no one else; although the girl was attractive enough to vex the soul of an anchorite.

Affairs continued in this state for some months, and when the hot weather commenced, Miss Lake—like most newcomers—felt its effects so seriously that the old people packed her off to stay with some friends on the hills till the blessed monsoon broke, and made existence on the plains more bearable. When she returned, four months later, it was patent to all that a great change had been wrought in her. Some surmised one thing, some another. From being affable, companionable, the girl scarcely acknowledged her former friends, and put on such an amount of “side” that everyone wondered. At last, in about a week's time, the whisper went round that Miss Lake, while on the hills, had engaged herself to be married! Then the question arose, “Whom to?” It was too delicate a query to put

point-blank to the girl or her parents—the more so as all three preserved a strict silence on the subject. The fact of the engagement oozed out through the Lakes requesting the Chaplain to arrange for the ceremony on a certain day. His reverence naturally said something about it to his Eurasian church clerk, who, as naturally, gave out the news in the bazaar, and soon the whole station rang with the tidings. Then the date of the wedding was bruited : people inferred that the happy man would arrive a little before the marriage day, and everyone stood on the tiptoe of expectation, in the meanwhile figuratively moving heaven and earth to find out who the fellow was. Lady friends of Mrs. Lake called informally on her, and insidiously endeavoured to worm out the secret ; men buttonholed the Colonel at the club, and sprung feelers on him in the shape of congratulations : but to no purpose—although the Lakes parried these advances with evident hesitation in their manner, that did not escape the notice of their inquisitors. The only one to tackle Miss Lake herself was Redoak, who, determining to probe the enigma, laid wait for her as she took her usual morning constitutional.

“ Do tell me who he is ! ” he pleaded.

“ I shall not satisfy your vulgar curiosity, Mr. Redoak ! ” she replied angrily.

“ I conclude he is in the Service ? ”

“ Come to any conclusions you like.”

“ Does he live on the hills, or is he a visitor ? ”

“ I refuse to answer you.”

“ Some old chap, I bet, and you do not care to own it, eh ? ”

“ I shall not tell you.”

"Why are you not inviting guests to your wedding?"

"Is that any business of yours?"

"Suppose not, but it looks funny. What sort of a fellow is he in appearance?"

"I am not going to describe him for your edification or anyone else's. He'll be here on view in a few days, when you can all see for yourselves."

"Do you think you'll be happy with him?"

"Do you think I would accept him did I fear otherwise?"

"He'll not make you so good a husband as I would, I'll take my oath."

"You may take any oaths you please."

"I would have devoted my all to you!"

"Your all!—consisting of a cavalry subaltern's pay; scarcely enough to keep you—much less a wife!"

"I shall rise in due course."

"In due course—yes; but in the meanwhile? And—and—if a family should come?"

"Well, that's only to be expected."

"Perhaps so. But look around; who is well off here? who is not more or less in debt? My father, for instance—colonel though he is, and drawing good salary, how much can he allow me for dress and things?"

"Humph! Your coming out of your shell a bit on the lucre part of the question makes me suspect that he's a rich fellow. Is he?"

"I shall not enlighten you."

"Some foreigner, eh?—some globe-trotter you've caught on the hop. Isn't that it?"

"I decline to tell you."

"Great Scott, you *are* close! At all events,

will you say if he is a gentleman—worthy of you ? ”

“ I shall not ! Good morning ! ” And she turned in at her gate, leaving Redoak in as thick a fog as ever.

The following appeared in the *Weekly Hill Excelsior*, which arrived a day or so later on :—

“ Another instance of transatlantic ‘ push ’ has been exemplified in our midst. The great Chicago millionaire pork-packer, Mr. Ebenezer Mayflower, sojourning here in the course of a world’s tour, has wooed and won—all within the space of a month—a young English lady well known at —, who had been staying on these hills for the sake of her health. Mr. Mayflower is reputed to be one of the richest men in the States.”

“ A darned pig-killing pork butcher ! ” fumed Redoak, as he read the above at the club that evening.

“ Yes ; isn’t it a beastly shame ? ” observed a man, overhearing him. “ Anyhow, she has kept her eye on the main chance, and won’t want for dollars. If they do send out invites for the wedding on Monday, will you go, Redoak ? ”

“ Not I ! I should want to convert the fellow into some of his own sausage meat ! I’ve no wish to be hauled up for murder ! ”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE UNATTACHED MISS

IN India there is an individuality about her more noticeable than at home. Here, she is lost in the mob ; there, she stands out—one of a few. Free as the air, her affections not yet set on anyone in particular, she is here, there, and everywhere. Of course, like most of these fair emigrants, she seeks a husband ; and when a suitable *parti* is found, she plays him, and regularly sets her cap at him. Her very freedom, her very intactness, scare away the poachers on other men's preserves ; but the handful of the better sort, with matrimony in their minds, present themselves. They parade before her, and she makes her choice ; but in the interim she is The Unattached Miss of this chapter.

Miss Dora Calgarry recently came out and joined her elder sister, married to Billpheat of the Survey, a man who spends most part of the year on field work, and leaves his somewhat delicate wife at headquarters. Minna Billpheat—a quiet little woman—was at once overshadowed by her handsome, go-ahead sister, who soon began to evince characteristics that frightened, without shocking, the unassuming Minna. Dora struck out a path for herself, and swung along it independently, carefully avoiding all ruts or other obstacles that might cause her to stumble. She made many female acquaintances—became bosom friends with some ; while for the other sex, a meagre outer circle gyrated round

her, feeling their way at a safe distance. She honestly explained to her lady cronies that she was anxious to get married ; that Minna, though all very well, had “ no go ” in her ; and that if she, Dora, did not act on her own initiative, she might die an old maid : while as for Billpheat being of any help, he was seldom in the station. She told them she wished to bring herself forward, so to speak, and begged her friends to keep their eyes open on her behalf. As it turned out, however, Miss Calgarry required no extraneous aid in achieving her purpose.

Dora possessed a nice little income of her own, consisting of the interest on money left her by a favourite uncle, to be held in trust till she married. An accomplished horsewoman, she purchased a waler from her first quarter’s remittance, and with this horse won a ladies’ race at a gymkhana ; a victory which so chagrined one of the competitors—Miss Mundford, the civil judge’s daughter—that she omitted to invite Dora to her wedding, that was shortly to take place. But Miss Calgarry scored again, when Miss Mundford’s fourth bridesmaid—due from a neighbouring station—at the last moment wired her inability to attend. The only three other local girls were already bespoken ; so Miss Mundford had perforce to eat humble pie to Dora, and beg her to fill up the gap : the dress had arrived, and she felt sure it would fit her, etc. etc. Dora agreed, appeared at the wedding in “ full fig ” for the first time since her coming, and looked so well that she commanded universal admiration, especially from Hautboy, Captain, R.E., who had lately taken to prowling round the fair Dora. Hautboy had confided to his intimates that he rather fancied the girl ; but he was fastidious on the subject, and wanted a

woman not only physically beautiful, but with a really good heart and plenty of pluck—"Not one of your useless, puling, afraid-of-a-spider sort, you know."

However, before matters had time to develop, Hautboy got thrown at the hurdles, and fractured his collar-bone. The station hospital boasted of but two Eurasian nurses ; both were engaged on enteric cases, and the doctors were about wiring to the Presidency for a nurse when Miss Calgarry, hearing of the dilemma, at once volunteered her services, which, needless to say, were gratefully accepted. Well, transferring herself over to Hautboy's bungalow, accompanied by her *ayah*, and caring not a jot what some people might think, she nursed him night and day. Thanks to her attention, the skilful doctors, and his own good constitution, Hautboy was soon on the mend ; and though no declaration had been made, it could not be far off.

Shortly after Hautboy convalesced and had returned to duty, the Commissioner gave a grand picnic to the whole of local Society. It was to be held at a picturesque shady spot a few miles out of the cantonment : tents would be pitched ; luncheon, tea, and dinner discussed ; the afternoon passed in tennis, badminton, and ping-pong, with a carpet dance in the moonlight by way of a finale.

Miss Calgarry looked very fascinating in a habit that set off her fine figure, poised in the saddle with that grace so peculiar to the proficient horsewoman. So thought Hautboy and his friend, Major Sippit, who, driving in the latter's dogcart, caught up the fair Dora, where they had the road pretty much to themselves, for several routes led to the picnic ground. Miss Calgarry walked her horse by the side of the dogcart ; all three were conversing merrily,



and had arrived within sight of the tents, when the rattle of wheels and galloping hoofs to their rear caused them to look round.

"Runaways, by Jingo!" exclaimed Sippit, wrenching at the reins and driving full-tilt across the shallow side-ditch. "Clear out of the way, Miss Calgarry!" he shouted to the girl.

Dora leaped her horse over the opposite side-ditch; and in a few seconds a wagonette, full of ladies, driven by a native coachman, passed like a flash. The pair of walers that drew it had the bits between their teeth, careering in mad flight, the driver desperately sawing at their mouths; the reeling vehicle, with its terrified load; their cries of alarm, their appeals for help! As the carriage thundered past, Dora re-jumped the ditch and tore after the runaways!

"Good God! what's she going to do?" muttered Sippit, cutting the mare, and causing her to spring—cart and all—back on to the roadway.

"On with us, Major!" cried Hautboy. "Heaven knows what may happen!"

The mare joined in the chase, the light cart bounding and ricochetting, with the two men eagerly looking ahead. In a few strides Dora gained on the wagonette, and when almost level, she dug her waler with the spur and raced for the runaways' heads, who now, hearing the clatter of other hoofs close by, increased their pace. They were nearly abreast of the picnic ground; folks already there looked on aghast, and men rushed forward with a vague idea of rendering aid.

"Back!" screamed Dora, divining their purpose. "Leave it to me!" As she spoke, they had flown past the turning to the tents; a few more yards

would bring them to an "Irishman's bridge," and reaching that spot meant certain catastrophe, for the out-of-hand wagonette horses would never negotiate that bridge in safety. The equestrienne was but a neck behind, when again calling on her waler she got even, and closing in, grasped the near horse at the bit, and pulling at him, by sheer strength she brought the wagonette to a standstill within an ace of the bridge!

"Splendidly done!" shouted Sippit, for the dogcart was close behind. "Now, Hautboy," he continued in a lower tone to his friend, "you won't hesitate any longer after that, will you?"

"I should think not! I'll ask her this evening."

He did—and was accepted.

## CHAPTER V

### THE GRASS-WIDOW

THE dictionary describes the term as "A wife temporarily separated from her husband," or "One deserted by her husband," or "A divorced woman." The first interpretation will best suit the spirit of this chapter.

The Grass-Widow is a prominent feature of Anglo-Indian life. Not that the genus is peculiar to that country alone, but she is more in evidence there. She—in common with her fellow-exotics—is one of the comparative few ; so any idiosyncrasy on her part comes to the front without much effort.

There are Grass-Widows and Grass-Widows, some of the more captivating of whom gain for themselves a certain notoriety, not always desirable. They chiefly affect hill stations, whither they resort as soon as they are free of their husbands ; though some remain on the plains during their lords' absence, not from choice, but probably because the house is their own, and they wish to save extra expenditure. Grass-Widows are evolved from various causes, of which a war is the most fruitful. When the red (khaki) coats go to either of our frontiers, into the " Buffer State," to China, or South Africa, the well-off ones ship their wives home ; but those who cannot, send them to the hills, there to vegetate or amuse themselves till the husband's return—*i.e.* if he is not shot or otherwise disposed of. If plague, pestilence, or famine breaks out, it is the black

coats' turn, and they are shunted in all directions over the stricken area. If the visitation threatens to be prolonged, the wives of the bloated Covenanted Civilians of course go home ; but the Uncovenanted women, and others similarly lacking the means, either resort to the hills or remain where they are.

It is a strange and curious fact that you seldom, if ever, encounter an old, done-with-the-sweets-of-life woman who goes by the appellation of Grass-Widow. As a rule, they are still on the sunny side of forty—a critical period in India for those of our fair ones who are not encased in a panoply of the soundest moral principles ; because frequently a girl who was simply mediocre when twenty substantially improves with time, and at double that age becomes far more “ fetching ” in her mellowness than she was in her callow days.

Mrs. Amanda Orkney is the wife of an Uncovenanted man, who being put on special famine duty has to go under canvas miles in the district, and rough it there for perhaps six months. Mrs. Orkney, who cannot stay on the plains by herself through the coming hot weather, goes to the hills. But she does not patronise the nearest, more fashionable range ; she knows that several other ladies of the station are already there, or intend going. She does not much fancy their propinquity : they are jealous of her superior attractions ; for their remarks—in which “ Madame Rachel,” and “ all made up,” and such-like pleasantries, are interlarded—have reached Mrs. Orkney's ears ; so she does not want to be under their surveillance while on her holiday. Therefore, when Orkney goes, she betakes herself to a little sanatorium far to the south, where she hopes to be free of such spite. Arrived at the solitary

hotel, she cons the local directory, and a glow suffuses her cheek as she comes to one name. She engages a vacant furnished house, situated in a secluded spot, and that same evening moves over there with her servants and baggage. In the morning she is up betimes, and is taking her early tea when a horseman trots up to the portico, flings himself out of the saddle, and almost flings himself at the lady.

"So it is you—Amanda! Thought I could not be mistaken when I saw your name last night in the list of arrivals at the club. But, heaven and earth!" he continued with a rush, holding her by the hands and running his eyes admiringly over her, "how you *have* improved—from the weedy girl I used to make love to coming out in the *Poonah*! Fifteen long years, wasn't it? I *am* glad we meet once more!"

"So am I, Mr. Loughton," she replied, colouring a little as she beams up at him. "I—I—had an idea you were still on these hills, and was pleased to find your name in the directory yesterday."

"Why were you pleased? We cannot spoon each other now."

"N-no; but we can be friends, and I shall depend upon you to give me a good time up here. I know no one else."

"I'll do my best," he said, now dreamily and almost sadly; "but, in spite of your sweet companionship, it will be uphill work for me, Amanda."

"Hush! do not call me 'Amanda.' Remember I'm a married woman."

"Yes, and must be treated as one, I suppose," he remarked sardonically. "What sort of a husband does Orkney make you?"

"A very good one ; and I hope always to be a good wife to him."

"Humph ! Of course ! Anyhow, I envy the fellow."

"Hush again ! Tell me, do you intend to remain a bachelor indefinitely ? "

"I've not met my fate yet ; but—but——"

"But what ? "

"I should have—now, were you free ! "

"Nonsense ! We can like each other, nevertheless."

"A difficult job for me—with the recollection of our voyage, now backed by meeting you again in all the glory of a splendid womanhood. And to think what I have missed ! It's enough to send me daft ! "

"Don't be silly ! I recollect as well as you, and I find you just as nice now as you were then ; yet I do not indulge in rhapsodies."

"Ah, you are a woman ; you handle the reins, hold the trump card in a game of this sort."

"No sentimentalities ! " she laughed. " Finish your tea, and light up ; perhaps a cigar will act as a sedative. Come, what is to be done up here ? "

"Oh, the usual thing. You had better call round."

"Are there any nice people ? "

"A few ; but mostly old folks—settled down on their properties. I see very little of the floating population, for I live two miles out."

"On your estate ? "

"Yes. I hope you'll come there and look me up. I shall feel like those fellows at Lystra, and think a goddess has visited me in the person of—er—your beautiful self ! "



A DRAWING-ROOM AT SIALKOTI.





“More nonsense! What would Mrs. Grundy say? I should require someone to play propriety.”

With sophistries such as these they continue the conversation for some time, till Loughton, carried away by his new-found infatuation, begins treading on dangerous ground, whereupon Amanda Orkney, still strong in her prudence, somewhat curtly dismisses him, with a hint not to repeat his visit. However, in a day or two she relents, and writes for him. He goes. He is humble; he realises that she is not to be taken with a rush; so he shapes his behaviour accordingly. She relents more yet: she asks him to dine with her that night. He accepts the invitation. And the last thing seen of them is two figures seated side by side on a sofa in the dimly lighted veranda—the man’s arm encircling the woman’s waist, the woman’s head reclining on the man’s shoulder. But that, and no more!

## CHAPTER VI

### THE "SCORPION"

IN almost every Anglo-Indian community is one at least of these pests to be found—always a woman, for man is not built that way. A spirit of mischief-making seems embosomed in her nature: she is never happy unless she is sowing discord, suspicion, setting others at loggerheads, bringing on climaxes in things that do not concern her—in fact, going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom she may devour. Hence, by all who know the creature for what she is, and who may or may not have suffered from her virulent tongue, she is dubbed "The Scorpion," and well does she deserve the appellation.

Our "Scorpion" is Mrs. Waltham, a widow of over fifty, who lives with her widower brother, Major Stockton. Unfortunate in promotion, and with no prospects even of an ameliorative Staff appointment, Stockton sent in his papers and retired on the pension of his rank. Too poor to go home, and liking India, he settled down at the station where he had last been serving; and when his sister wrote from up-country announcing Waltham's death, and suggesting that they should join forces, as she also preferred India, where her widow's pension would go further, he agreed to the proposal. Mrs. Waltham came, and they have been domiciled together during the last ten years—more vegetating than living, for leisure has converted Stockton into a sot, while his sister, equally

the victim of idleness, and cursed with a naturally viperish disposition, has developed into a "Scorpion."

Being gentlefolks, they hold a quasi standing in local Society. They are seen out occasionally in company—that is, when Stockton is not too obfuscated; but more often Mrs. Waltham shows by herself, at the Band, driving in a low pony phaeton, at church, or any public function, and once in a way at some dinner-party; for she is not a *persona grata* except with one or two elderly ladies who love to hear any bit of scandal that the widow may bring along. In her pursuit of unearthing and bruiting the peccadilloes of others, Mrs. Waltham attempted to enter into an alliance with the Misses Puddifat, two maiden sisters of the pronounced goody-goody type; but those astute spinsters soon realised that the widow was maliciously "guppy," so, fearing that their own goody-goodness might suffer by an infusion of the scandal-mongering element, they gave her the cold shoulder.

One night, tempted by a splendid full moon, Mrs. Waltham, ere retiring to rest, went out for a short stroll. It was pretty late, and she met no one moving about; but on returning, while passing a bungalow, she descried a woman standing inside the low gate, and a man leaning over it. She knew the parties: Mrs. Lawftus, wife of Captain Lawftus, the tenant, and a newly arrived infantry sub named Shields. What did they there, at that hour of the night? Mrs. Waltham was in black, so, by keeping in the shade of the avenue trees, she would escape notice. She used her eyes, but could not catch a word of their murmuring voices; and being afraid of approaching closer, she crept away.

The next morning, Mrs. Waltham sent secretly for Mrs. Lawftus' English-speaking *ayah*, promising the woman a rupee for her trouble. The rupee is as potent in India as the dollar in the States ; so as soon as she could manage it, the maid smuggled herself over.

"*Ayah*," commenced Mrs. Waltham impressively, "what is this I hear about your mistress ?"

"What, ma'am ?" queried the startled Abigail.

"She is friends with Mr. Shields, isn't she ?"

"I think so, ma'am. That gentleman coming to house : master not liking, so he tell Mr. Shields come no more."

Quite enough for Mrs. Waltham. Having dismissed the *ayah*, she ordered her phaeton and drove over to her chief crony, Mrs. Mint, and imparted her news, which Mrs. Mint drank in with avidity. They discussed it, conjectured over it, and—as is usual with such people—built upon it. Then Mrs. Waltham drove to Madame Serpolette's (really Katie Mudgkins from Stepney), the one European milliner in the station, who gave herself out as coming from the great Parisian costumiers Lenfant, Perdu & Cie. Here, under the pretence of selecting some silks for a cushion, our "*Scorpion*" whispered her intelligence, and expressed her conviction that an elopement was well on the cards. By that evening the whole cantonment talked of nothing else, and the good people thereof had not to wait long for the dénouement. After dinner, a billiard tournament of mixed players was to be held at the club. Competitors and spectators of both sexes had assembled ; the high benches were crowded, while many occupied chairs. Mrs...

Lawftus sat by herself in a corner partially screened by a palm, and at whom folks cast furtive glances ; also at Shields, who was in the first game, and stood chalking his cue. Presently, in walked Lawftus.

"Halloa !" he cried in a loud voice, after looking round, "where's your sister, Shields ?"

"There you are," grinned the young fellow, pointing to the corner.

"Oh, ah ! Well, one moment, ladies and gentlemen, please," continued Lawftus, addressing the room. "We hear there is some confounded gup flying about the place concerning my wife—that she contemplates a flit with Mr. Shields. Now, Mr. Shields happens to be her brother. True, appearances rather warranted the conclusion arrived at by the reptile who spread the report ; but the facts are these, and which I make known with my brother-in-law's full concurrence. He is in debt, and when he came here the other day with his regiment he applied to me to help him. Not approving of the cause that brought him into difficulties, I refused ; and on his continuing to pester me for a loan, I lost my temper and forbade him the house. Being hard pressed, he one night got his sister—my wife—down to the gate of our bungalow, and was asking her to talk me over, when I suppose the vampire—whoever it is—saw them, and spread the poisonous report—of course in ignorance of the relationship of the parties concerned. As I wish to scotch the libel at once, I have refuted it in your presence ; and further, to clinch the matter before you all, I give this to my brother-in-law. Here you are, Shields !" — handing him a cheque. "I hope this will tide you over."

Tableau ! Judge, too, of their feelings when

Mrs. Waltham and her coadjutors came to hear of it!

The Reverend Hermon Hill, the Chaplain, aware of Mrs. Waltham's propensities, held that lady in no good repute, and treated her with cold civility; but when, later on, owing to Mrs. Lawftus' *ayah* blabbing about that interview with the widow—to whom the authorship of the report was consequently brought home—his reverence, and very rightly too, decided to give her a piece of his mind on the subject. For some days, seeking an opportunity to do so quietly, and without creating a scene, he saw his chance one evening at the Band, where, finding Mrs. Waltham seated by herself, he approached, and leaning over, whispered in her ear, "O full of all subtilty and mischief, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord by spreading malicious reports of thy neighbours?"

## CHAPTER VII

### THE OLD MAID

“When I was a girl less than sixteen years old,  
I was scornful as scornful could be :  
I was taught to look out for wit, wisdom, and gold ;  
And less would be nothing to me.”

POOR Miss Glumstead ! Alas, the “wit, wisdom, and gold” failed to come along. The epitome of her life’s history is written in the old ballad quoted herein, and which we dare say many of our readers are familiar with. When she was just blossoming out of her teens, she experienced her one romance ; and had she played her cards well at that crisis, the chances are she would now be the *Buddah Beebee* or great lady of a crack native regiment, an arbitrix of Society at a large military station, as Quarrender, whose offer of marriage she refused, is now a full colonel, a D.S.O., with medals on his breast, still a bachelor of forty-eight—gay, debonair, and well-preserved. And she had forfeited all this ! But then, you see, she had been “scornful” in those days of the dead past twenty years ago ; her heart had not been her mentor, and no sooner out from home as a beautiful girl of nineteen than she made the fatal mistake of dismissing Quarrender, and she has never been able to recover herself since.

“Ah, those were the days when my eyes shone bright,  
And my cheeks like the rose on the tree ;  
And the ringlets they curl’d o’er my forehead so white ;  
And lovers came courting to me.”

Her mother,—a worldly woman,—whose own married existence had been employed in an endless tussle with ways and means, took the daughter in hand, and pointing to the struggle she herself had undergone and was still undergoing to make both ends meet, so impregnated Naomi Glumstead's mind with the vital necessity of forming what her parent called "a good match" that when Lieutenant Quarrender, the pick of those who had been dangling after her, came to the scratch, and asked the young lady to be his wife, she simply scoffed at him and said "No"—for lo you! her mother, anticipating the proposal, had gone to the trouble of ascertaining that Quarrender, though of a good West-of-England family, possessed not a stiver to bless himself with: he had nothing but his subaltern's pay, and no expectations of any description whatever. True, he would rise in rank; but in the meantime?

"The first was a youth any girl might adore,  
As ardent a lover as could be;  
But my mother had heard that the young man was poor,  
And a poor man would not do for me."

And so it went on. Actuated by her mother's inculcations, the greed of gold became paramount in the fair Naomi's bosom. She looked around her: she observed how hard pushed were many of those young married couples who did not command private means on either side; she noted their cutting and contriving, their cheese-paring, and—last, but not least—their state of chronic indebtedness: insights which fixed her determination to wed for money, relegating Love to the second place. Time passed: Naomi Glumstead ripened, mellowed, faded, and at length subsided into the regular Old Maid, bereft of all pretension to beauty or even comeliness, grown



ungracefully aged, eking out a solitary, cheerless life in her own house, the one legacy of her dead parents, and on the sixty pounds per annum from Lord Clive's Fund.

Why there should be Old Maids is a question all the more pertinent in these days wherein instances are so frequent of mature women mating with men young enough to be their sons.

And yet you see the Old Maid everywhere. In India, however, she is more of a rarity, for, despite the spinster's great rival and hindrance in the person of the Fast Married Woman, any girl not an out-and-out hideosity in face, figure, or both, stands a chance of "hooking" someone more or less desirable and suitable, because in the Land of the Rupee the marriageable fair sex are at a discount, while there is a corresponding glut in the matrimonial market of men—over and above the "poachers"—on the look-out for wives. No : it may be accepted as a self-evident axiom that any single woman in India, in possession of at least some little gift of Nature, and who attains to Old Maid's estate, has in some way to thank herself only for being left out in the cold, like Miss Glumstead—through a hankering after money, through over-fastidiousness, a moral trip,—which, though it should blow over, still clings to her like a bur,—or a lapse into the goody-goody error ; any one of which is sufficient to scare away the man on matrimonial thoughts intent.

Poor Naomi Glumstead ! she has quite retired to a back seat, and makes no attempt now at asserting herself. At first, when the glass told her that she was nearing the dreaded "sear and yellow" stage, she desperately endeavoured to retrieve her fortunes, but in vain, and soon realised the futility

of the contest. No man would look at her—in the light she wished ; so she gave it up as a bad job. She now wears easy shoes, dispenses with high heels, is not particular as to the shade of her hosiery, does not patronise the European Milliner's for her corsets, but gets them cheap from the bazaar ; puts up her grey hair in a frumpy bygone style, and is seldom seen abroad. She has a small circle of lady friends, who, knowing her to be a gentlewoman, look in on her occasionally, and she goes to tea with them—provided they send a carriage ; for she cannot afford to keep a conveyance, or hire one. She is kind-hearted, ever ready to do a good act if within her power ; nevertheless, she steers clear of the grand fallacy that most women situated as she is are guilty of : she does not enroll herself in the ranks of the goody-goody sisterhood, for she does not pretend to be better than her fellows. She believes that, unless your righteousness really and truly transcends the righteousness of such people of the scribe and Pharisee order, why, you may whistle for admission to Valhalla, and are more likely to go to “ the other place.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE REIGNING BELLE

OUT yonder, for a girl to arrive at the proud pre-eminence of Reigning Belle, a consensus of male opinion must elevate her thereto. Male opinion, mind you, not female. You would not acquire a single favourable vote from among the latter ; for it goes without saying that, according to feminine humankind, the bare fact of one woman being elected as local Queen of Beauty over the heads of the others is enough to arouse the envy, hatred, and malice of her less blessed sister-exotics, who, were the truth known, would like to "scratch her eyes out."

As soon as the Reigning Belle feels sure of her footing, she begins to assert her sovereignty to an extent that the crowd dare not attempt. While treating those unfortunate ones with a species of compassionate contempt, and in nowise meddling with their own little schemes, she has been known to enter the lists against the Fast Married Woman, even to the extent of luring away some of her votaries—not to add them to her own apron-strings, for she hates these "poachers," but more for the fun of scoring off the objects of their infatuation, and enjoying the discomfiture of the fair sirens themselves. As for herself, with her own worshippers, she takes liberties and manages them in a manner beyond the scope of other girls.

An amusing case of this kind happened at a

small up-country civil and military station in India boasting of a mere handful of whites. A Major MacBeat commanded the half-battalion in garrison, and he, three or four other officers, and a few civilians formed the lot. One of the black coats—Pyott, the Judge—had his wife and daughter with him; the latter, a lovely, accomplished girl of five-and-twenty, the Reigning Belle of the station, and with whom MacBeat fell desperately in love at first sight. Directly antithetic to Miss Pyott, the only other spinster in the station was a Miss Kanterfisher, sister of the Civil Surgeon, and acknowledged by all to be devoid of a particle of attractiveness. Besides this, it was known that, whereas Miss Pyott would bring her husband a substantial *dot*, and had further expectations, the other girl possessed nothing, either in the present or future. MacBeat, though a good officer, an approved soldier, and with a large private income, was commonplace to a degree—couldn't say "Bo to a goose," in fact. However, folks soon found out that he had a weakness: he was a miser—a curmudgeonly one, too, for all his money. Matters speedily assumed a three-sided shape, amusing as unique—a triangular game of diamond cut diamond. Miss Kanterfisher idolised MacBeat; he avoided her like poison, and adored Miss Pyott, who did not care a squirrel's jump for him: while as for the two young ladies, a difference of tastes and an incompatibility of ideas in general had drifted them apart long before the bawbee-loving Scotchman appeared on the scene. Miss Pyott was a good-natured girl; and MacBeat's attentions not being acceptable to her, she tried to shake him off—quietly, and not so as to wound his susceptibilities more than she could help. She was ignorant of anything

in particular against the man ; she simply did not fancy him, and wanted him to understand it. She gave the Major every hint ; she did everything short of actually snubbing him, of telling him to begone—but to no effect : he hung round as assiduously as ever. In due course the girl came to hear of MacBeat's miserly propensities,—one of his brother-officers let the cat out of the bag,—and Miss Pyott, taking her cue from the revelation, determined to make capital out of it ; so, a few days afterwards, she wrote to MacBeat, asking him to come over, as she wished to consult him on an important matter, and naming an hour when they would be alone. Full of joyful expectation—for this was the first invitation of the kind he had received from her—the Major went, and was ushered into the young lady's private morning-room.

“ Major MacBeat,” she commenced, “ I have a favour to ask of you. I think you—er—like me sufficiently well to grant it.”

“ I feel honoured, Miss Pyott,” he replied with fervour, and tingling all over. “ Pray command me. What is it that I can do for you ? ”

“ This. I am very interested in the contemplated mission to the Bheels : the sermon on the subject preached last Sunday by the Missionary has strongly roused my sympathies, and I am anxious to get up a subscription—quite apart from church collections and stray donations. But I want to do it privately ; to raise an appreciable sum, you know, which would come to the Society as a pleasant surprise.”

“ Yes ? ” said MacBeat, groaning inwardly, for he felt his pockets threatened.

“ I have made out the subscription list,” con-

tinued Miss Pyott, producing an ominous-looking foolscap sheet from a drawer, "and have headed it with your name; for everyone is aware that you are the richest man among us. May I expect you to give a good round sum? Others seeing it will, I'm sure, follow suit."

"I—er—shall be—er—very glad to subscribe—for your sake, Miss Pyott. Er—how much—er——"

"Do I propose—you would say? Well, I'll gauge that by my estimate of your—your—regard for me. I shall put you down for a thousand rupees," and suiting action to word, she entered that figure against the wretched fellow's name, and tossed the paper across for his signature.

As soon as MacBeat could recover his senses, he blurted out, "Excuse me, Miss Pyott, but—er—I must—er—go home, and refer to my—er—bank-book."

"Whatever for?" she demanded, arching her eyebrows.

"W-well, to—er—see if—if—my balance c-can stand so big a—a—withdrawal."

Chuckling inwardly, she let him go; and presently, the Major's orderly brought the following letter:—

"MY DEAR MISS PYOTT,—I much regret my inability to afford a large subscription to your very meritorious scheme; but I hope you will accept the enclosed currency note for five rupees, which I have much pleasure in sending. Kindly make the necessary correction in the list, and believe me, devotedly yours,  
ALLAN MACBEAT."

Just what she hoped for; so she sat down and wrote:—

"MY DEAR MAJOR MACBEAT,—I find by the

enclosed that your regard for me is one two-hundredth of what I estimated it at. I therefore return your currency note for five rupees, and at the same time would suggest the transfer of the attentions you honour me with to Miss Kanterfisher, who, I take it, is not so exigeante, and is better prepared to accommodate herself to your standard than I am. —Yours truly, EMILY PYOTT."

The cream of the whole thing is that this slap in the face had such an effect on MacBeat that, in a fit of the sulks, temporary mental aberration, or both combined, he went straight off and proposed to Miss Kanterfisher, who accepted him on the spot.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE PASSÉE BELLE

SHE is not to be confounded with the Old Maid of an earlier chapter. The *Passée Belle's* case is not so altogether beyond remedy as that of poor Miss Glumstead, although it is fast trending in the same direction, and if she does not look out, she will find herself in the same box with the forsaken Naomi. Unlike the latter, though, Emmie Clifton has not been exposed to the same influences: she was not schooled to stick out for "wit, wisdom, and gold"—rather the other way about; for, going her own way, she has been eager to fling herself at any man, whether rich or poor. In fact, she has been too facile, too accessible, but without committing or compromising herself. Nevertheless, this very ductility has marred her matrimonial prospects, and she has now to fight an uphill game. Another thing: she is given to saying "nasty things" about her neighbours—men especially. She thinks it smart to bestow objectionable nicknames on those who may offend her. For instance, when Mr. and Mrs. de Hoskyn Bute came out from home, Miss Clifton, jealous of that lady's more fashionable footgear, christened them "*The Horseskin Boots.*" Again, when Colonel Bosanky once remarked that she did not look well, she revenged herself by a sarcastic if not over-refined reference to his waist measurement. And so on.

Emmie Clifton, when she first arrived at Lawung-







THE NEW UNITED SERVICE CLUB CHALET, SIMLA.

pore, was undeniably attractive, and men flocked round her ; but when they noticed that she was equally nice to all comers, those who meant seriously by her were choked off, while those with questionable intentions, encouraged by her happy-go-lucky unconventionality, formed their own inferences, and began to treat her accordingly : but she soon undeceived them, and they too gave her a wide berth. Thus year after year sped. Her charms waned, and now, at the time we write of, she had faded : she had become the *Passée Belle*. Younger and fresher women have elbowed her out.

This is Miss Clifton's seventh year in India, and she will be thirty next birthday. She still retains traces of facial beauty, and keeps unimpaired a remarkably fine figure, which has been—and is—her chief asset. Her father is well off, and it is known that Emmie will bring along a comfortable dowry to the altar, if someone would only accompany her thereto. And then, when she was at her last gasp, so to speak, a chance did come, which, if she had taken at the flood, would have led her to—matrimonial—fortune.

Finsbury, a bachelor Police Officer, was transferred to Lawungpore. He paid a round of visits, and on seeing Emmie Clifton was immediately struck with her. He made up to the girl, and although he received no particular encouragement, she was civil to him, which aroused his hopes. Finsbury, while a thoroughly good sort, was decidedly ugly, with a simian cast of countenance, devoid of a single redeeming feature. He was a crack polo player, so he forthwith joined the club, of which he soon became a leading member. One day a grand match was to be held, Civil *versus*

Military ; and Finsbury asked Miss Clifton to come and look on. Of course, by now he had heard the "gup" about the girl, but did not believe her to be as bad as she was painted.

Emmie drove to the ground in her wagonette. The game had not yet commenced ; but on a bell ringing, the players mounted, and were soon at it, hammer-and-tongs ; Miss Clifton, in her excitement, standing up and holding on to the splash-board. A scrimmage takes place : anon, there is a rush ; the ball is seen flying over the ground, and the field—headed by Finsbury—tear after it. Another *melée* ; then a sudden lull, and men dismount—to gather at one spot. Divining an accident, Emmie, who among her other peculiarities loved notoriety, jumped down and hurried across to where the players were congregated around Finsbury—lying there senseless. His pony had thrown him, and before he could recover himself, one of the following animals had kicked the poor fellow on the head !

"Lift him up !" whispered Miss Clifton. "Our bungalow is closest, and he can be laid full length in the body of my wagonette, with one of you by him."

To be brief, Finsbury was confined to the Cliftons' house for a week before the doctors allowed him to be moved. Emmie nursed him devotedly, with apparent disinterestedness, but in reality to get patted on the back for her philanthropy. Her kindness, however, touched the man's heart ; so ere being shifted to his bungalow he warmly thanked her, and determined to ask her to marry him as soon as he recovered his legs.

While still keeping his room, men dropped

in to see him, among them Major Homerton—one of those who had vainly sought favour with Miss Clifton, and consequently owed her a grudge, which he resolved to pay her now; for he, as well as others, had heard from the doctors that Finsbury was evidently smitten.

“Glad to find you mending, Finsbury,” said Homerton, after the usual inquiries. “By the way,” he added, chortling, as if at a huge joke, “do you know your new nickname?”

“No; what is it?”

“‘Pongo,’” grinned the visitor.

“I dare say,” sighed Finsbury gloomily; “I’m aware I am no beauty. Who gave it?”

“Miss Clifton. Yesterday, at the tennis courts, Mrs. Rewster said to her, ‘Are we to congratulate you, Miss Clifton?’

“‘What about?’ she queried.

“‘Is it not a case between you and Mr. Finsbury?’

“‘That Pongo!’ snapped Miss Clifton. ‘No indeed!’ speaking with such an air of contempt that we at once twigged that the ‘gup’ about you two was all bunkum.”

A settler for Finsbury; while Emmie lost as good a chance as ever came her way.

She knew she had made enemies among the residents, and clung to the possibility—even at the eleventh hour—of entrapping some fresh arrival before he learnt of her antecedents. But no: fate was against her; people gabbled about her and described her failings. She had once been pretty, they said; but she was now “a bit *passée*,” and so on.

Then, when the unfortunate girl was seriously

thinking of throwing up the sponge,—by doing away with herself, entering a convent, or taking to some such *dernier ressort*,—she read the following advertisement in a Bengal paper :—

“English gentleman, elderly, in comfortable circumstances, no encumbrances, is desirous of opening correspondence with a lady of between thirty and thirty-five years of age with a view to matrimony. Write in first instance to J. B., c/o *Bengal Mercury*, Calcutta.”

Eureka! Emmie rose to it. Correspondence started; photographs exchanged; negotiations set going; and “J. B.,” travelling all the way from Calcutta, turned up at Lawungpore, where he had a personal interview with Emmie. The result was mutually satisfactory, and within the fortnight Miss Clifton became Mrs. Birk, wife of John Birk, head of Birk & Brandenburg, shippers and exporters of Calcutta.

## CHAPTER X

### THE GOODY-GOODY WOMAN

ANGLO-INDIAN morality, up to a certain pitch, is not over-exacting: in excess of this pitch, it is not in an ethical sense worse than the corresponding laws regulating other communities. The sterner portion of our people in the Orient—there are exceptions—prefer those women who are less orthodox, less circumspect in their observance of the proprieties; while among the fair themselves there are many broader-minded ones, who, though not endorsing or emulating the doings of their venturesome sisters, yet do not condemn them, do not shrink aside as if pollution lurked in the mere contact with their garments, or poisonous bacilli were to be inhaled with the air they breathed. The world over, there is always to be found a certain people—women, notably—to whom anything savouring of audacity in members of their sex is analogous in their minds to sin and wickedness. These would-be Puritans have laid down a moral code, stern and uncompromising: there is no deviation from its rules, no dubiety in its maxims. The upholders of these inexorable tenets, you may be sure, suffer from a dearth of Nature's gifts: they pose as the salt of the earth; real good stuff, not to be cast out and trodden underfoot. They affect to be for ever hungering and thirsting after that righteousness which, alas! the world gives to no one but themselves; but if the

truth were known, they exist on one chronic diet of sour grapes, one eternal envy of those other women who, in virtue of their superior attractions, are able to achieve what they—the “ unco guid ”—dare not aspire to.

There, in that bungalow near the tract depot, live the two Misses Hye, and Mrs. Pattomley, a widow ; all middle-aged, homely, and unlovely, the Goody-Goodies of the station. They have been fixed there for some years, and very little is known of them, because they count few friends, and keep much to themselves. They must have certain means ; otherwise, how could they maintain their establishment ? how afford to dispense their charities ? The Misses Hye are daughters of a long since dead-and-gone General Officer ; Mrs. Pattomley, the relict of an engineer. They stand alone in the world ; and it is supposed that, in answer to a “ call,” they elected to remain in India among the heathen, for the report goes that at the outset of their self-imposed goody-goody career they started on a proselytising campaign ; but apparently they did not go the right way to work, for they controverted some of the Missionaries’ inculcations, which, coming to the ears of those reverend gentlemen, they naturally raised opposition, and moved the Society to get a restrictive injunction laid on the “ poachers,” so that they—the Missionaries, the legitimate labourers in the vineyard—should have it and the fruit thereof to themselves. Therefore our fair friends ceased preaching in the highways and hedges, and took to hammering the principles of Christianity—according to their own lights, that is—into the brains of a few select disciples who attended at their bungalow, perhaps on the strength of sundry



material supplements to ghostly advice which the ladies bestowed upon them. Further, a number of poorer folk, afflicted with divers diseases, muster twice a week for gratis medical treatment, supported by doles of coppers, blankets, etc., and who also make believe to give heed unto their teachings. These periodical parades were always held during the early morning, so that our people passing on the road or riding on the alongside mall could catch sight of the function ; the recipients being made to sit down in a company fronting the house, with the ladies, sun-hat on head, moving among the poor wretches—thus literally doing their alms to be seen of men. They regard the Fast Married Woman with absolute horror—there is vinegar in the glances they bestow on her followers ; and so careful are they of guarding against contamination that once, when their bullock coachman drove them a short cut past poor Perdita's little bungalow, they gave him such a talking-to as to make the fellow tremble in his sandals.

Having come to ructions with the Missionaries, they hold aloof from those resident in the station, both men and women ; but when some stray worker comes in from outside, a stranger to the locality, they—the Misses Hye, generally—try and get hold of him. Directly they hear of his arrival, they go over to the travellers' bungalow, where the newcomer stops for want of an hotel ; or waylay him at the Mission-house gate. They introduce themselves, and ask him to tea that evening. In his ignorance, he accepts. The sisters, jubilant, hurry home, tell Mrs. Pattomley ; and all fall to, sweeping, garnishing, and preparing. The widow undertakes to bake some scones—for the produc-

tion of which she is supposed to be noted ; Miss Hye unearths certain garments—generally resting in semi-oblivion—for herself and sister ; while the said sister again dives into their Noah's Ark-like bullock coach, bound for the Europe-shop, to purchase unaccustomed delicacies in the shape of Lipton's tea, a small box of mixed biscuits, and a pot of marmalade. The hour comes, but not the man, who, instead of presenting himself, writes over, simply stating inability to keep his engagement.

" I feared this all along ! " growls Mrs. Pattomley, picking up one of her hot buttered scones and meeting her brilliant false teeth in its unctuous but rather stodgy depths ; for lo ! in her excitement over the coming festivity, she had not used quite enough baking powder. " Those brutes have been at him and poisoned his mind against us ! "

" Yes ! " hisses Miss Hye vixenishly, " and told their usual lies ! I hope they will meet with their proper reward ! "

" And fancy, all this preparation for nothing ! " fumes the younger sister, pouring out the tea. " I should like to go across and knock all their heads together ! "

Remarks whereby it will be realised that these ladies, *malgré* their assumed sanctimony, are not above speaking as the froward and perverse do, when occasion prompts them.

At variance with the *bona fide* evangelists, one expects that, to secure some measure of the odour of sanctity which they aspire to move in, they would try and keep up with Mr. Lazzenby, the Church of England Government Chaplain ; thus having at least one ecclesiastical prop to lean on. But his reverence advocating the saving grace of sacrament

to an extent that offended the three ladies, they expressed their disapproval too outspokenly, which, reaching Mr. Lazzenby's ears, already cognizant of the *casus belli* 'twixt his fair critics and the Missionaries, he avoided them *in toto*, for which they repaid him by vacating their rented sittings in the station church and joining a small chapel.

When the good old Bishop of the diocese, accompanied by his Domestic Chaplain, came on a tour of visitation, he asked if there were any charitable folks in the place. Mr. Lazzenby named our Goody-Goodies, refraining, however, from saying anything uncomplimentary about them; whereupon his Lordship signified his intention of calling, and his pleasure that Mr. Lazzenby should accompany him. This went against the Chaplain's grain, so at the last moment he excused himself from attending. His Lordship therefore went alone. On his return, Mr. Lazzenby ventured to ask the Bishop how he fared, what he thought of the ladies, etc.

"Cats!" whispered the great churchman, chuckling. "Got their claws into you—from what they said. Don't wonder at your crying off coming with me. Cats! wolves in sheep's clothing—that's what they are!"

## CHAPTER XI

### THE GREY-MARE WOMAN

HERE, in suburban London, when during week-end we see the city drudge, clerk, or whoever he may be, wheeling a child-laden perambulator with an air of the sublimest resignation pathetically beautiful to behold, the sight sets us wondering if the lady accompanying him—presumably his wife—who, albeit her bored and crabbed expression, rears her plumed crest half up to the skies, or tows it in a draggle-tail half-way down her back, suggestive of the caudal feathering of a rooster with the pip ; a lady with thin lips and determined mien—we wonder, we say, whether she is a specimen of middle-class home Grey-Mare Womanhood, and “bosses” that pram-propeller of the lugubrious countenance. *Quién sabe?*

Out in India the conditions are different. Scattered in isolated communities, we get to know all about each other ; and as gossip is a prevailing weakness with our gentler sex, very little remains hidden that sooner or later is not revealed, either through the insouciance of the parties concerned or the scandal-monger’s agency.

Our experience of Anglo-Indiana has shown us the fallacy of always accepting the Grey-Mare Woman as she is popularly typified : strong-bodied, big, harsh-featured, deep-voiced, and ruling some inversely poor example of male humanity—her husband. Frequently, while he presents the beau-

ideal of a man in all respects, the wife who assumes "the unmentionables" is a delicate little bird of a creature, in whose mouth—to look at her—butter wouldn't melt.

To evolve the Grey-Mare Woman, there must be complete subjection on the part of the husband; otherwise, their case would be one of the common connubial-infelicity order—they would fight like cat and dog. So, to avoid these jars, the man—who is the more philosophical of the two—accepts his fate and submits. She keeps the bag; he hands his pay over to her every month. She knows the amount of his income, and any shortage therein he has to account for. If he frequents the club too often, if he stays late at mess, if he is extravagant in his cigars, sends too many shirts to the wash, indulges in food and drink to an extent she disapproves of, he "catches it"; and lastly, if he dares to cast an admiring eye on another woman, then the climax comes, and there is no holding her.

That Mrs. Byson ruled Captain Byson became known the very day their regiment marched in. As was usual on such occasions, the residents had a tent pitched overnight a mile or two out, with refreshments for the officers and ladies of the incoming corps, while a number of the station people rode out to the tent in the morning to welcome the newcomers. It is a good old custom, but disappearing now; route-marching on transfer being fast superseded by utilising the railways. Well, all was joviality and good-fellowship: the strangers and their entertainers forgathered, and refreshments were set going—tea, etc., for the women; something stronger for the men. Byson, at the invitation of one of the hosts, was about imbibing a whisky-and-

soda, when his wife, spotting him, shrieked in a shrill alto, "Arthur, you're *not* to drink whisky at this time of the morning! Put that down, and ask for tea or coffee!" A silence fell on the assembly: they looked at Byson—fine, handsome, strapping, and soldierly; they looked at Mrs. Byson—a thin, flat-chested woman with sharp features and hectic colour. Then, when Byson submissively obeyed his wife, they saw how it was, and—pitied him.

Fast Mrs. Beckenham, taken by Byson's Apollo-like proportions and his immeasurable superiority to her existing admirers, resolved to make a conquest of him, and enjoy the *éclat* that would be hers in luring him away from "that shrew"—an appellation which Mrs. Byson had already earned. Byson, while a splendid soldier, was somewhat simple-minded, and at heart susceptible; consequently this, the first temptation since his marriage, proved too strong. Mrs. Beckenham literally led him by the nose. Handsome, fascinating, a finished intrigante herself, and fathoming the man's guileless character, she infused him with some of her artfulness; the result being that Byson—tutored by his charmer—succeeded for some time in eluding his watchful wife. He took to absenting himself more than hitherto, but never when he ought to be "on duty" with her—a trick that cannot be played in India for long ere discovered. So people soon began to talk about seeing Mrs. Beckenham and Byson together at abnormal times and in incongruous situations. For instance, during calling hours, from eleven to two, when Society was either "peacocking" or sitting in state to receive visitors, the couple would meet at the now empty reading-rooms, and enjoy an uninterrupted *tête-à-tête*, although the charger of

the one and the well-known yellow-wheeled dogcart of the other, standing outside, told passers-by who were within. Again, when all the exotic world would indulge in the afternoon siesta—that set feature of Anglo-Indian life—Byson would be off “to the lines, or the firing ranges,” he said, and join his siren at the Europe-shop, where, under pretence of inspecting goods, they would folly and philander till it was time for him to get back and accompany his wife to the Band or whatever else was going on. Mrs. Beckenham herself had no necessity for this dust-throwing: her husband—an Uncovenanted Civilian—remained all day long at the Government offices, taking his tiffin there, and seldom returning home till late; besides which, he was one of those purblind, uxorious old fellows—much his wife’s senior—who saw no harm in whatever she did.

At last came the crash. Mrs. Wagstaff—an unsuccessful rival of the other woman—came across Byson and his enchantress at that very Europe-shop. There they were right at the farther end, making believe to be examining something. Sniffing significantly, and not letting them see her, Mrs. Wagstaff, bubbling with fiendish glee, sneaked out and drove fast to Mrs. Byson’s bungalow, where, without alighting, she called for that lady and imparted her news. Careless of the sun, too furiously impatient to order her trap, Mrs. Byson put on her sun-hat, jumped on her bicycle that stood handy in the porch, pedalled hard, and reached the Europe-shop in no time. There was, of course, a scene. Mrs. Byson raved; Byson was dumb, and wished the earth would engulf him; while Mrs. Beckenham, after enduring the jealous wife’s invective till she could bear it no longer, stalked out of the shop.

The gossipers speedily heard of the fracas ; they made capital out of it, and for some weeks Byson underwent a purgatory. At length, by sedulously avoiding Mrs. Beckenham, making a great show of contrition, he calmed his wife down, and they were reconciled. But lo ! in due course a certain event in Mrs. Byson's conjugal career necessitated her going home—alone, for Byson could not get furlough, as a little frontier war was on the cards. After seeing his better half off at the station, and while on his way back, Byson encountered Mrs. Beckenham going out for her evening ride. Now being his own master, he gaily joined her.

“ Well,” she said, as he turned his horse alongside, “ how do you feel, dear boy ? ”

“ Like I used to at school when finishing an imposition,” he replied, grinning. “ Hope the kiddy—if it survives—won't have her temper, that's all ! ”



## CHAPTER XII

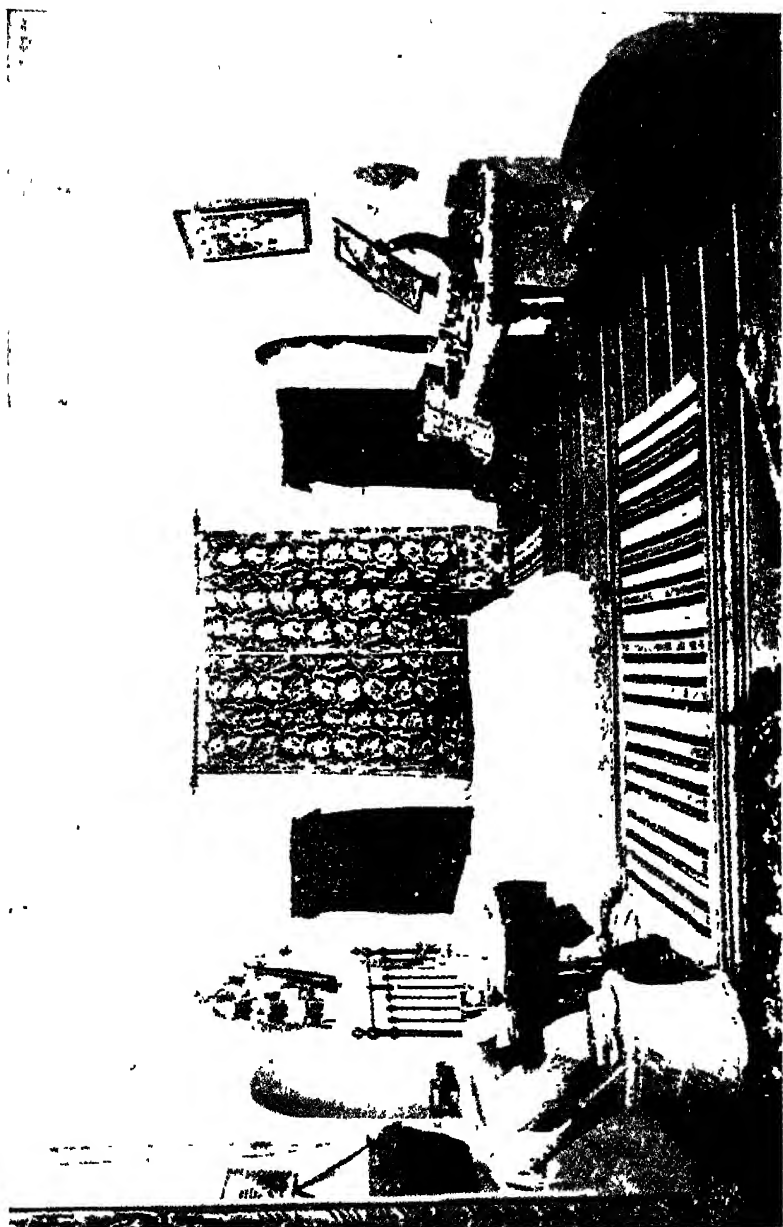
### THE NOSTALGIC WOMAN

HER lot is not enviable. Once the married woman in India yields to nostalgia, then, however favourable other conditions may be, go she must, although she may have a good husband, and enjoy every other blessing to give her contentment. Perhaps she hankers after her elder children, at school in the dear homeland; or her parents are still in the flesh, and she yearns to see them once more. It is all very well during the first blush of her new life in India—novelty, the heyday, the glamour that surrounds her as, haply, one of the beauties of a big cantonment; but if she does not cede to these allurements, does not get her head turned, become fast, and thus find interests to reconcile her to remain on, the whole thing begins to pall, and in spite of a devoted husband, younger children with her, she succumbs to nostalgic melancholy, and must hie home at all costs. Some are swayed by shallower motives—those who have to vegetate in some God-forsaken hole, where the newly arrived woman has scarcely an associate but her husband: no resources, no amusements or gaiety; nothing but one dull monotony from day to day. She wearies of this, pines for a return to home life, and strains every nerve to get away. Where want of means interferes, she disregards her husband's exhortations to exercise patience till he can afford to accompany her home; and she

secretly answers advertisements calling for lady-helps in consideration of passage money. Should she come to terms with any of these, she then tells her husband—"squares" him, and goes; but if her negotiations fall through, she hangs on—miserable and morose, until the man is in a position to book their berths.

Shortly after Clavick was transferred to the station, he became intimate with the Rosslins; a mutual taste for floriculture forming the bond of sympathy. They were nice quiet people, and though apparently without cares, Clavick was not long in discovering the inevitable skeleton. Two sons—of fourteen and twelve—were at school in England; while here, with them, they had a boy of six named Freddy—the dearest, most lovable little fellow, but alas! an incurable cripple. Now, while Mrs. Rosslin idolised the absent sons, her love for Freddy partook of the negative order, in spite of which the child simply worshipped her. On the other hand, Rosslin was passionately attached to his helpless last-born. At the time referred to, the Rosslins had been three years in India, and nothing had occurred to mar the even tenor of their way except Mrs. Rosslin's gradually increasing anxiety to go home and see her boys, which at length growing unbearable, she had it out with her husband, and after an unusually painful interview, she got her own way, and would be leaving for Bombay in a day or two. Poor Rosslin was distracted. Freddy would remain with him—in charge of a trustworthy *ayah*; but what was that compared to a mother's care—however qualified and lukewarm?

When, on the morning of Mrs. Rosslin's departure



A BEDROOM AT SIALKOT.



by that night's train, Clavick went over to bid her good-bye, he found Rosslin alone in his study, the picture of woe.

"How am I to stand it, Clavick?" he moaned. "It's bad enough for me; but poor Freddy will feel it far more. And then my having to look after him during his mother's absence!"

Clavick sympathised deeply; and while racking his brains how he could be of service, a thought suddenly struck him, and he whispered, "Will you let me try my hand with your wife, Rosslin?"

"To dissuade her from going? 'Twould be useless: you could not shake her."

"You'll see her off at the station to-night?"

"Must; though I shall not like leaving Freddy. I expect he will cry his eyes out."

"Make some excuse, and don't go."

"I can't very well do that, Clavick. Why do you suggest it?"

"I will meet her at the station: only let me take Freddy."

"What in Heaven's name are you driving at?" exclaimed Rosslin, staring perplexedly.

"Never you mind. Say 'Yes.'"

"If you mean to try and persuade her to take Freddy, I say 'No' at once; 'twould break my heart to part with him: more so when he couldn't stand the voyage just now, and when his mother can bring herself to desert the poor little chap."

"Even so, I think she has a soft spot in her heart for him. However, trust me—will you? and ask no questions. I swear to bring Freddy back."

"Well, as you are so earnest over it, Clavick, I agree."

"All right, then. Square your wife about not going with her to the station; but mind, not a word of Freddy or me. I'll come round in a closed coach by the rear way half an hour before train time: till then—ta-ta!"

In her exultation at the thought of soon seeing her boys, Mrs. Rosslin made no demur when her husband excused himself from seeing her off. He would be sure to break down, he said; besides which, he did not like leaving Freddy with the servants. The wrench came: a wild outburst of grief on the part of husband and child; a torrent of tears—more of vexation than compunction—on the part of the wife and mother.

Mrs. Rosslin's carriage had hardly left the porch ere Clavick, in a hired one, bowled in by the back way. He took the still weeping child from his father, and telling Freddy that he was going to see something nice, carried him into the conveyance and drove off.

There was plenty of time, for in India it is usual among us to forestall the train schedule; so that when they reached the station, Clavick had twenty minutes in which to work out his plot. First ascertaining that Mrs. Rosslin was in the ladies' waiting-room, he smuggled the docile Freddy into the booking-office,—he was well known to the officials,—and instructing him to sit quiet till his return, he went to Mrs. Rosslin.

"Mr. Clavick!" she exclaimed, staring at him in astonishment. "What do you want?"

"To ask if I cannot implore you to draw back."

"No!" she replied coldly. "I must go to my children at home."

"I am convinced you have a heart, in spite of

your stoicism, Mrs. Rosslin. Will you not stay by those who have more claim on you than your two boys ? ”

“ No. The die is cast. I must go—for a year.”

“ And in the meanwhile ? Think ! Reflect ! Is there no tie which, for very pity’s sake, you ought not to sever, even for a day ? ”

She glanced at him for a moment ; then the corners of her mouth quivered, her eyes filled, and she murmured, “ Yes—poor little Freddy. But I must go to my other children.”

Making no rejoinder, Clavick hied back to Freddy, carried the child to the waiting-room door, and placed him on his feet. Directly the little fellow saw his mother, he tottered weakly towards her, and with a cry of joy threw himself into her arms.

That did it. Claspings the little cripple to her heaving bosom, Mrs. Rosslin there and then shook off her nostalgia, and returned to her home, where peace and happiness reigned once more. Then, in due course, they all went to England together, accompanied by Clavick, now their soul-bound friend, who managed to “ hit off ” his furlough to suit the occasion.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE "CHURCH" WOMAN

SHE is no Pharisee. The "Church" Woman serves her God without making a whited sepulchre of herself, like those of the goody-goody type already described; she is an honest Christian, devoid of cant and hypocrisy. This sort of individual soon gains popularity, though at the outset the more heedless of the community, suspicious of the lady's leanings, shun her, till, realising that she does not "shove her religion down their throats," does not strive to make them believe that she is nearer to salvation than they, that she can be seriously-minded without a snivelling sanctimonious accompaniment, why, they take to her *con amore*, and even the most irresponsible sub is not frightened of the woman.

Our Church of England Government clergymen out there leave proselytising among the natives to the Missionaries. A chaplain's flock consists merely of the Europeans and Eurasians of the place, while the average Indian station boasts of a single Church of England, manned by one chaplain, a half-caste clerk, and a few servants. The post of organist or—more often—harmoniumist is generally honorary, held by a lady of the station, or by the clerk's wife or daughter. The choir is composed of Eurasian lads from the Government school, who are paid a small fee out of the church funds, and our sidesmen here are represented by lay trustees, gentlemen residents, who, in conjunction with the minister, look



after the church business and carry round the collection plates or bags.

The Reverend Hubert Thinton has been here for some time—an elderly, quiet, excellent man, with nothing go-ahead about him; doing the best he can with his unpretentious little tabernacle and his small congregation. He is not a brilliant preacher; he has not the rare gift of stirring the hearts of his hearers: the consequences being that folks go to church more as a matter of *mâmool* or habit rather than to derive unction from Mr. Thinton's discourses. He is quite aware that the services, from the present-day standpoint, are not up to much; that the choir especially, under the guidance of Miss Josephine Jeremiah, the clerk's only daughter, undoubtedly requires improvement; and that the church decorations on feast days, the handiwork of the native servants, were scandalously meagre and out of taste. His reverence hopes in vain for some one of the congregation ladies, with musical ability and artistic eye, to come forward, oust the coffee-coloured Josephine from the harmonium stool, and superintend the decorations; but no one has offered. They are inclined to stiff-neckedness and perversity; while he himself, for lack of "push," has made no effort towards persuading some fair member of his flock to do the needful.

At last the tide turned, when Lynford, the new Survey man, joined from home furlough, bringing his bride with him. They made a very favourable impression, particularly Mrs. Lynford: big, handsome, with a laughing eye; not in her first youth, but by her manner betraying no tendency towards the "grim and gruesome." The Lynfords attended service the first Sunday. Nothing remarkable hap-

pened till the choir lifted up their voices in a hymn, whereupon Mrs. Lynford—fresh from England—was somewhat exercised, if not amused. She ceased singing herself and listened to the choir-boys, who, in their “chee-chee” accent and half-caste patois, uttered the words of a well-known hymn—

“How shweet the name of Jeezzuz sounds  
In a beleever’s ear;  
It sheuthzes his sarrow, heeuls his woonds,  
And er drives away his feer.  
  
It er makes the woonded shpirit whole,  
And er kawms thee trubbled breast;  
It ees manna to the hungary shoul,  
And er too the weerie rest.”

“Mr. Thinton,” said Mrs. Lynford, on meeting the minister later in the week, “who trains your choir?”

“Miss Jeremiah—she whom you saw presiding at the harmonium on Sunday,” replied the Chaplain dolefully. “I wish someone more capable would take them in hand.”

“They sing in tune, but with a curious twang, elongating words, and introducing additional syllables, marring the rhythm—don’t you think?”

“I do indeed! But that is inseparable from their class.”

“Surely it can be eradicated!”

“Possibly—with careful teaching. But whom have we here to do that? When I first came, I attempted to correct them myself, but am ashamed to say I lost patience over it. Besides, I have no time.”

“May I try, Mr. Thinton?”

“I wish you would!” exclaimed the clergyman eagerly—“and take the harmonium as well.”

“What about Miss Jeremiah?”

"Her services are purely voluntary. She can easily be disposed of."

So it came to pass that there was soon a marked improvement in the musical part of the services : not only did the dusky choristers pronounce their words properly, but, under Mrs. Lynford's manipulation, that harmonium spoke as no one could remember having heard it speak before.

Christmas Day approached ; and the Chaplain giving Mrs. Lynford carte blanche regarding the church decorations, that lady bestirred herself in the good work. Further, she suggested to Mr. Thinton the holding of two Christmas treats to all the children in the station, both high and low.

"Nothing would please me better," replied his reverence ; "but I have no funds to assign for the purpose. What I do manage to scrape together is swallowed up by the poor box."

"I will go round and 'tout' for subscriptions," laughed the lady.

"Will you ?" rejoined the minister admiringly. "I hope you will be successful ; for I attempted that when I first came, but found the people very chary in responding."

"Nothing like trying. What do you say ?"

"That you, my dear lady, are a very present help to me in time of necessity," answered the Chaplain seriously and gravely.

Mrs. Lynford drove up to the cricket pavilion just as an innings closed. The sun was still high ; no ladies had yet come down, so she had only men to deal with.

"Major Wallingford," she said, addressing one of the several who hastened forward to assist her

to alight,—“no, I won’t get down, thanks,—I have come to call for volunteers. Will you help me?”

“Er—certainly, Mrs. Lynford,” replied the Major, while the others listened in silence. “Volunteers for what?”

“Decorating our church for Christmas Day. I want six gentlemen—nimble and spry, mind—to meet me at two o’clock to-morrow at the church. I shall have sent over the flowers and foliage by then.”

After a pause of astonishment—for this was something new, and perhaps not altogether congenial—a number of men offered their services, and the six were bespoken.

“Thank you so much! Now,” she added, taking a paper from her pocket, “this is a subscription list, for two Christmas treats—one for the children at our end of the stick, the other for the poor. All gentlemen please contribute. I am going to tap the ladies after finishing with you.”

Carried away by her charm of manner, every fellow there subscribed; and later, when on completing her round she had the satisfaction of handing Mr. Thinton the list, the total represented quite a substantial sum.

To the accompaniment of sundry little irreverences on the part of her gentlemen aids,—and which Mrs. Lynford good-naturedly suppressed,—the church was most tastefully embellished. The children’s treats duly came off—the one at the Club, presided over by Mr. Thinton; the other at the school, by Mrs. Lynford, at her own request.

Thus, by acts such as these, our “Church” Woman, without turning up the whites of her eyes, made herself an acquisition to the station.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LADY DOCTOR

THE Lady Doctor has not actually caught on yet in India, except among the more "advanced" native females, who believe in our Western medical treatment. She is to be found at some of the Presidency Women's and Children's Hospitals, and obstetric establishments more commonly called "Lying-in-Hospitals." Here she lords it over her female underlings, and treats with hauteur any he-medicoes—subordinate or otherwise—who may be associated with her. In the Presidency cities themselves, the larger up-country centres, and the principal hill stations, she sets up as a practitioner on her own account, exhibiting a gate-board with, say, "Miss Menthol, M.B., M.D.," etc. Naturally, her clientele is among the gentler sex; though many of our women disapprove of the Lady Doctor, and prefer a man. Of course, having gained medical degrees, her professional capabilities are accepted without question; but, unfortunately, she is not always what could be wished for.

Again, one would think that the Lady Doctor in India studied to keep in accord with the male members of the profession. Not as a rule: the men do not welcome her, while she deems herself superior to them. They scoff at such pretensions, and regard her as an interloper, a poacher on a preserve which has been sacred to their sex from the days of Æsculapius himself—for lo you! the

ingress of woman to the field of medicine and surgery is a product of comparatively modern times. Well, she may or may not be equal to the man doctor in point of proficiency; but "she knows how to charge," especially when depending on an entirely private practice.

As an instance illustrating the above remarks, we give below the experience of a personal friend with a Lady Doctor. Let it be understood, however, that we do not insinuate that all Lady Doctors are equally indifferent and undesirable: far from it. There are some excellent, clever women among them; but failures exist in every walk of life, and L——'s story shows one as in the ranks of these feminine Galens:—

"Some years ago, I became very ill, both mentally and physically. I had had sunstroke; lost my memory; other complications set in; so I reported sick, and after a spell of treatment by the local Civil Surgeon, finding myself no better, I asked for a medical board to retire me; for I had served twenty-five years on end in India, and with poor prospects of promotion I had lost heart, not caring to hang on longer—even if the doctors patched me up. The medical board, instead of invaliding me right off, recommended two years' sick leave on half-pay, not to England, but to the Presidency, where I was to remain under medical observation; and if at the end of the two years my condition justified it, then another board would retire me. Well, my family and I went, all comparative strangers to the place; for we had never lived there—only passed through. We settled down in a nice bungalow; I reported myself to Surgeon-Colonel Kingston, the proper medical authority, and handed

him my 'case.' After examining me, he said that I required more rest than remedies ; that the change would do me good ; and to report to him in person once a fortnight at his hospital.

"The change did *me* good, but not my wife, who, after we had been there a month, developed—er—hæmorrhoids. One day she suffered such agony that I insisted on calling in a doctor—a step she had hitherto fought against because of the expense. Under 'Professional' in the local paper I had read: 'Mrs. Anna Crickwood, M.B., M.D., The Palms, Marina Road. Consulting hours, 7 to 10 a.m.'

"I had thought of going and fetching Colonel Kingston, but that would entail a long drive, and I might not catch him. Marina Road was close by. I remembered seeing Mrs. Crickwood's gate-board ; and wishing to relieve my poor wife of her pain, I hurried off on foot to The Palms. I saw Mrs. Crickwood: a great stout blonde, with a shrewd expression and greedy, greenish eyes. I told her all, and she engaged to come round immediately after ten. She kept her word ; but before going in to see my wife, she said, 'Mr. L——, my charges are twenty-five rupees a visit: can you afford that?'

" 'Hardly,' I gasped, astounded at the figure ; 'but I will see that you are paid.'

"I conducted her to the bedroom door. Presently she came out, sooner than I expected, and joined me in the veranda. 'It is the usual thing,' she remarked off-handedly. 'I will send a mixture and some suppositories. Do you know how to apply them?'

" 'Oh, I think so,' I curtly answered, be-

coming disgusted with the woman's indifferent manner.

" 'Very well. Your wife is sure to mend now. I shall not come again unless you send for me. Good morning !' And away she went.

" The fact—I'm morally convinced the fact was this : she had ascertained that I was on half-pay ; that she did not feel quite sure of her money, and, being of a grasping nature, she did not intend fashing herself over the case, and so behaved accordingly. As soon as she had gone I hastened into the bedroom.

" ' Oh, she was so rough and brusque !' moaned my wife. ' She scarcely examined me ; asked only one or two questions ; and merely said that the medicines she was going to send would set me right.'

" To be brief, those medicines did no good ; and after my wife had suffered for another week, instead of calling in Mrs. Crickwood, I sent for Colonel Kingston.

" ' I'm afraid you were wrong, L——, in resorting to one of these Lady Doctors,' observed the Colonel, when I had told him all. ' I myself have no opinion of them ; and this Mrs. Crick—— However, we'll see.'

" He was not more than five minutes in the bedroom ere he came out—fuming. ' Just as I thought !' he muttered. ' She has mistaken the case altogether. It requires more drastic treatment than mixtures and suppositories. Your wife is in great pain, and—to be candid—in for a hard time unless prompt measures are taken. I'll be back soon ; in the meanwhile, you prepare her for a little operation—under chloroform.' And away he drove.



“Colonel Kingston speedily returned, bringing a hospital nurse carrying a bag. Requesting me to be present, he first tested my wife’s heart—with satisfactory results. Poor little woman ! She was very brave, though I myself felt awfully nervous. The doctor applied the anæsthetic, taking a long time to get the patient under its influence. At last she swooned off, whereupon Kingston performed the operation deftly and successfully, made her comfortable, brought her round, and then left, promising to call again in the evening. He came daily for a week. My wife mended, and in a month’s time was quite herself. On my asking Colonel Kingston what I owed him, he charged me only fifty rupees for the whole of his attendance on my wife, including nurse and medicines ! Think of that ! When I paid him in person, and thanked him for all his goodness, his last words were : ‘ Lady Doctors are all very well, L——. I don’t say there are not clever women among them ; but I say this, that as long as there is a man doctor to call in, why, call him in, and leave the women alone ! ’ ”

## CHAPTER XV

### THE ZENANA VISITRESS

SHE is rather a rare bird, and usually of an interesting if not amusing personality. She is either a paid member of the Zenana Mission or an independent labourer with private means to carry on her work and do just as she pleases. She is generally a lady by birth and education, who, failing in other walks of life, adopts Zenana Visiting as a business. She is always a Miss, and, as a rule, unattractive—which last may account for her state of single blessedness. Being a soldier warring against the enemies of the Cross, it is natural to suppose that she would fraternise with the Missionaries, ingratiate herself even with the goody-goodies. Not she! Our Zenana Visitress, while despising the latter, maintains that the Missionaries are all very well for preaching in open bazaar or chapel; but to strike at the root of infidelity, you must approach it via zenana and harem: you must enlist womanly influence on your side; and if you can talk the females over, they will bias their menkind much more than all the missioning and goody-goodying on earth. Then again, another incongruity: though no beauty, so far from being prim, prudish, and puritanical, as would beseem the Zenana Visitress's office, she is just the other way about. She gets in with all the residents; joins anything going on; and, albeit nearer forty than thirty, she plays tennis, rides,—if someone lends her a horse,—dances, banters

with the men, and propitiates the women easily—for they cannot be jealous of one who is so uncomely.

Miss Stella Pooker made rather a sensational debut at the station. She came from Central India, and was one of the independents. Finding both wings of the travellers' bungalow occupied by two bachelors, and having nowhere else to go to in the first instance, she told the English-speaking butler to request the inmates to vacate one side by doubling up together in the other.

"*Abbah!* (Good gracious!), I praid (am afraid), ma'am. That side, engineer; this side, post superent (superintendent). Engineer, he pustclass (first class) gentleman; other, yeastinjun (East Indian, or half-caste). They not liking ishtap (to stop) same room."

"Go and say I wish to see them both," rejoined the Zenana Visitress, alighting from her hack coach and entering the veranda.

The two men came out simultaneously, and stared at the lady.

"Will either of you vacate a room for me?" commenced Miss Pooker. "I believe you are by yourselves, so can easily share one between you."

But they didn't see it; and, after a pause of astonishment at such a cool request, said so.

"Very well, then," retorted the lady. "I'll make you!" Saying which, she signed to her coachman and servant to dump her kit into the apartment occupied by the postal man.

"Whaat nonsense—this!" outgrabled the half-caste in his peculiar patois, as Miss Pooker calmly entered his room and sat down.

"It means that the sooner you get out the

better," she sternly rejoined; "for I'm going to undress, and have a bath before dinner!"

Dismayed by the threat, the Eurasian promptly hastened across to the other room, compounded with the engineer, and in a twinkling cleared out—bag and baggage. There was a great laugh in the station when the incident became known; and that postal man got properly chaffed for his discomfiture by the fair (?) ones of his community.

Miss Pooker did not allow the grass to grow under her feet. She dropped cards. People realised from her diction that she was gentle, and, though ugly as sin, she soon got into the swim of local Society. After engaging a small bungalow and settling down, she started her business—on virgin soil, be it said, for as yet no Zenana Visitress had been here. She invaded the native town, and being proficient in several Indian languages, she speedily established a connection among the more respectable native families. She was an object of curiosity to us; and one day when she showed at the tennis courts, play over, and folks sitting about, a "cheeky" young sub named Mullreddy tackled her.

"Miss Pooker," said he, "do tell us something about yourself."

"What?" she queried. "My Christian name, age, parentage, birthplace, do you mean?"

"No, no!" replied Mullreddy, grinning sheepishly. "About your experiences in those mysterious regions behind the *pardah* (curtain), where we men are denied access."

"Ah, that would be tellings indeed! But what do you want to know?" she added, seeing that everyone was "all ears."

"Well, doesn't your work smack of the confessional? I mean, don't you *dumkow* (threaten) the native women into confiding their little pecadilloes to you?"

"I do not *dumkow* them; they sometimes voluntarily make a confidante of me."

"Then do tell us some, Miss Pooker—if they can bear repeating," urged Mullreddy.

"Breach of faith," she laughed, shaking her head. "But, leaving out all serious subjects, I will give you some of the more amusing of my experiences since re-starting my work here. I——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Newington, the Assistant Collector, an interested listener. "Miss Pooker, have a lemonade before you begin."

"Thank you, I will."

"With a dash of whisky?" suggested Mullreddy—winking.

"Well, yes, please. I do not pretend to be a saint or teetotaller."

"Bravo!" cried several; while Mrs. Wynter, the Fast Married Woman, clapped her hands.

"Well," commenced Miss Pooker, after imbibing her "peg," "our aim is chiefly to improve their minds, and stir them to a livelier sense of their obligations as wives and mothers. As soon as their rampant curiosity about ourselves is satisfied, we take up religion—telling them the old, old story; to which they listen patiently, not scoffing—like the men do at the Missionaries."

"But this curiosity, Miss Pooker?" asked someone.

"As I have said—concerns us, our affairs, and our clothes. For instance, when the other day I called on the wife of your principal *zamindar*

(landowner), she said she had heard of Zenana Visitresses, but I was the first she had met. She asked how many children I had, and on learning I was unmarried, she expressed pity, and pointing to 'the silver threads among the gold' on my temples, observed I had no time to lose in securing a husband. Then she asked my name. She made a great hash over the 'Stella,' pronouncing it 'Eshtella,' in spite of all my efforts to correct her; but on giving my surname, she uttered a shriek of amazement, and said that 'Pooker' in the Telugu language was a—er—naughty word. Is it?"

"Hah, hah!" chortled Newington,—passed in Telugu,—“it is! However, go on, Miss Pooker.”

"Then she asked how many garments I had on. I told her, and—and showed her. In short, she went through the whole gamut, in a state of wonderment; but she laughed till she cried on seeing my—my—stocking suspenders."

Another roar of merriment interrupted the recital; and then Miss Pooker continued: "When there was nothing more to investigate, the woman ordered in refreshments—consisting of milk in little brass cups, a tray of native sweetmeats, and—a packet of English cigarettes. I drank a cup of milk, and when I refused the sweetmeats, she offered me a cigarette—with a box of matches."

"Good woman!" shouted Mullreddy. "And how did you meet the difficulty, Miss Pooker?"

"Of the cigarette? Lit it and smoked it," laughed the lady. "What's the harm?—Gracious!" as the gongs clanged, "seven o'clock! I'm dining out this evening, so must go. Good-night, all!"

“Sensible party that,” observed Newington, as Miss Pooker’s tall figure was lost in the gloom.

“Ay,” muttered a man, “and not half a bad sort, but for her confoundedly ugly face.”

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE MIDWIFE

Go where you will in India, you are struck with the resemblance, the family likeness, existing among the Midwife sisterhood. Most of them are pure Europeans, generally widows of soldiers or civilian subordinates. In appearance they are of the "fat-fair-and-forty" type; some showing remains of pristine allurements, but of the grosser order. They occupy little bungalows in the middle-class quarter of the cantonment, where their gate-boards announce them as "Diplomaed Midwife and Nurse," "Accoucheuse," "Professional Obstetric Nurse," and so forth. Where the diplomas come from, or what their right to "professional," is not very clear. However, knowing that such titles are open to challenge, they would hardly sport borrowed plumes, and so run the risk of exposure. Unlike married actresses, who pose as "Misses," the spinster Midwife generally writes herself "Mrs."; they think the brevet adds to their dignity, begets more confidence in doctor as well as patient, and indicates—though it does not follow—that they have been through that mill which Eve's initial error has handed down to all feminine posterity.

When a certain domestic occurrence draws nigh, the doctor concerned generally nominates his own particular Midwife, and sends her over to pay her preliminary visit; in the course of which all arrangements are made, and a day fixed for her to



take up her residence with you till the expected event is over. You yourself shift to the other side of the bungalow, while the Midwife is given the room next to your wife's. The doctor looks in regularly, and after seeing his patient, holds whispered conversations with his "adjutant," no doubt on the business in hand.

Mrs. Gillivray looms large in every direction. She reminds you of a good-looking coster or flower-selling woman; though by no means grimy or slatternly, for she is as clean as a new pin, and neatly attired. For the nonce, she, in accordance with your wife's wishes, oversees the household: she writes up the bazaar or expense account at the cook's dictation, abuses him if he cheats too much, and orders the meals. When a visitor on "kind inquiries intent" drives up to the porch, Mrs. Gillivray hurries out and interviews the lady preparatory to ushering her into the sick-room or not, as the case may be. The callers are always of the gentler sex; for the state of affairs reigning in your bungalow is common property; so the men—your own chums, even—keep off; but should some ignorant or forgetful "he-fellow," turning in at your gate, spot the amply proportioned accoucheuse in the veranda, he promptly turns tail. She is not exigeante in her charges, which are generally on a fixed scale; and she declines to attend for less so long as you sit above the salt, whether a drudge on three hundred or a "boss" on three thousand rupees a month. She has her meals served in her room. She is allowed what she fancies, and is easily satisfied; the only thing stipulated for being a pint of stout at tiffin or luncheon, and ditto at dinner. She is a very early riser, and cannot do without her coffee the first thing.

She does not rely upon your household for this refreshment. If you are up at dawn, you will notice a little pariah girl stealing up your drive carrying a tin pot: that tin pot contains Mrs. Gillivray's matutinal coffee—brewed at home by her cook-woman. She takes the tin pot in at the bathroom window, dismisses the girl, and warms the drink on an oil stove—provided at her special request. Then lo! the fragrance of a good cigar assails your olfactory nerves. The aroma is too fine for the rubbish smoked by the servants; so it is evident that Mrs. Gillivray is no anti-tobacconiste. She has a voice, though she owns to an ignorance of one note from another when your wife suggests her playing something on the piano—at a time when no callers are expected. She is very partial to "Mona," "Alice, where art thou?" "Wait till the clouds roll by," and "Molly darling"; humming or softly singing them whenever off duty, till we become "fed up" with those ditties.

You enter into conversation with Mrs. Gillivray, whom you find seated in one of the veranda lounges, reading.

"Keep your seat, Mrs. Gillivray," you hasten to observe, as she jumps up on your appearance. "Well, how is your patient?"

"Doin' nicely, sir. I have just given her a cup of Benger's, and she's takin' a nap now."

"Glad to hear it. Er—you've been associated with Major Chiffinch in this sort of business before now, eh?"

"Oh yes, sir; several times. He always has me for his cases. He is a very popular doctor here, sir."

"So I believe. All of them are not—are they?"

"Lord love you, no, sir! It's the manner of the man that has half the doin' of it. He always keeps a smilin' face; and even if things becomes serious-like, he never says 'die' till all hope be over."

"Ah, a good bedside manner, eh?"

"That's it, sir. Helps along his patient, and gives us confidence too. Surgeon-Major Chiffinch is a jewel, he is, and I'm always glad to work under him. I wish they was all like him."

"Alarmists among them, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. There be one doctor in this place—I won't mention his name, askin' your pardon, sir—whose face and way of speakin' be enough to turn milk sour."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir. Not long ago I was engaged by a civilian lady, attended by this doctor I'm tellin' of. I had no patience with him. He was everlastin' warnin' the lady not to do this, not to eat or drink that—frightenin' her quite unnecessary. Then he would round on me, orderin' me to see to this and see to that, as if I did not know my business!"

"That must have been very annoying."

"It was, sir. But," she added, after a little hesitation, "I don't think he liked me bein' there."

"Why not?"

"Well, you see, sir, in the first place, the lady had already closed with me, independent of him, and of course he wanted the case for Sal Tiggerty."

"Who is Sal Tiggerty?"

"He gets her on his cases when he can, sir. She ain't no better than she should be," observed Mrs. Gillivray, with a significant sniff. "Besides that, he considers me a bit unprofessional, sir."

"Unprofessional! In what way?"

“ He has given out—and it has reached my ears—that he thinks a midwife should keep herself to midwifery, and not dabble in other things, as he calls it.”

“ And do you dabble in other things ? ”

“ In a way, sir ; but quite harmless. What’s a poor widow without a pension to do when cases is slack ? I keep pigs, sir.”

“ What’s there wrong in that ? ”

“ Well, you see, sir, I kill a pig occasional, make bacon and hams, as I learnt to do at home afore comin’ out here with my husband’s regiment, and I sell the meat to the gentry.”

“ Very praiseworthy of you. I’m sure no right-thinking person—— Halloa, there’s my wife’s hand-bell ! ”

“ Christmas will soon be round, sir,” she said ere scuttling off—taking this opportunity of securing our custom in the pig-meat line. “ I’m goin’ to slaughter a fine Chinee pig—fattened up a purpose. May I hope you will take some of him, sir ? ”

“ Certainly ! Put us down for a loin of fresh pork, also a ham, and a side of your bacon—when ready, Mrs. Gillivray.”

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE "SLAVEY"

It frequently turns out to be a mistake to bring a European female servant to India, either as lady's-maid or child's nurse ; and those rich people who can afford the step realise their error sooner or later : for if the girl does not go wrong—as many of them do—she marries "right off the reel." This is the rule ; but there are, of course, exceptions. The white woman out there is much in the minority. There are individuals among the men who, desirous of marrying, and hard pressed for a wife, are not particular about discrepancies in degree ; so when a "Slavey" comes along, even unattractive and "getting on," a general dead-set is made at her—by the crowd who do not believe in her moral stamina ; but with a stray man among them who has honourable intentions regarding her.

A prominent disadvantage—say what you will to the contrary—is that the "Slavey" is out of place in India. She is treated as an inferior by her employer and her fellow-exotics ; while some of the native domestics accord her due respect, others—the more forward—recognise the girl's dependent position, and hold her as one of themselves : they are insolent to her, familiar with her, in spite of the wretched creature's efforts to keep them at arm's length. She is absolutely "'twixt the devil and the deep sea," with the whites on the one hand and

the native servants on the other. True, her mistress is condescendingly kind : gives her every reasonable comfort, and plenty of liberty ; no sumptuary laws enforce the wearing of caps, aprons, and other visible badges of servitude ; she can dress as she pleases, so long as she does not “ monkey ” or try to rival her lady. Being well paid, and everything found her, she can afford to spend a portion of her wages in finery, apart from her monthly remittance home to her parents. Her duties are comparatively light : if a “ tire-woman,” she holds charge of her mistress’s wardrobe, and has the “ doing ” and “ undoing ” of her—perhaps half a dozen times during the twenty-four hours, from the early morning *negligée* to the final midnight disrobing on return from some junketing. She disposes of these duties with ease, for in addition to her own hands, she commands the services of one or more *ayahs* ; while for millinering, repairing, etc., she has the permanent house tailor to assist her—a very valuable aid she finds him, too, the Indian *durrzee* (tailor) being superexcellent in his line. If the “ Slavey ” is a nursemaid, she has, beside her own bed-sitting-room, a large airy nursery, where she keeps the child or children while the mother is otherwise engaged. They take their meals together, and in the care of the little ones she has not only her native female underlings, but also a *chokra* (lad) to wheel the perambulator when giving her charges an airing. Further, if the child can sit a box-saddle, the party is augmented by a *syce* or groom, who leads the pony—the nurse trudging alongside, the *chokra* holding an umbrella over the youngster, and the *ayah* shuffling in the rear, chewing betel-nut industriously. If from the commencement she

establishes a funk and makes the servants know their places, well and good ; if not, they will take advantage, and by undue familiarity subject her to many annoyances—such as rallying the girl should any white man ogle her in passing, and so forth. Should company be at the house, the mistress—with perhaps pardonable pride—makes occasion to show the maid off by summoning her on some pretext ; whereupon the lady visitors mentally appraise the girl's clothes, while the men surreptitiously "tot up" her good points. At stated periods—notably, on pay-day—the nurse is given a whole day off, and the use of a carriage, when, arrayed in her best, she drives to the European shop or shops, purchases whatever she requires in the shape of fal-lals ; then to the post office, where she adds to her savings-bank account, and makes the remittance home to her people. She may end up the holiday by looking in on any friends that she has made in the cantonment.

Khaishputtun is one of your typical dead-and-alive little sub-civil stations, hardly redeemed by being the administrative headquarters of the recently opened railway. Four men are seated in the veranda of one of the few bungalows, all young bachelor Government officials. It is evening ; and after tennis they have adjourned to Barkshire's house, which by common consent is regarded as their club and reading-room combined.

"Halloa !" suddenly exclaimed Portreeve, who had been conning a paper, "here's the passenger-list by next Saturday's mail boat, among them 'Mrs. Gaynsborough, child, and nurse.'"

"Wife of that stuck-up old stick-in-the-mud

Gaynsborough, the Railway Manager," observed Lemman musingly.

"By Jove!" put in Mincher, "it's to be hoped that the presence of a missus will bring the old rooster off his high horse and out of his shell a bit. A chap with his big screw ought to entertain, and make himself nice to us poor devils."

"A nurse too, eh?" chuckled Barkshire. "I wonder how she will turn out?"

"'Slavey,' every inch of her," growled Portreeve; "ugly and old, most likely. The young, fetching ones don't often come out to this confounded country: they stay at home."

"What's the use of speculating about the girl?" remarked Lemman testily. "She won't affect us."

"She will—me, I know, if she's at all presentable," observed Barkshire, with significance in his tone.

"Snakes, yes! I also shall cultivate her—under the same proviso," laughed Portreeve.

"In fact, we all will, and see who'll win her smiles," sniggered Mincher.

"Don't include me," protested Lemman.

"Why, hang it, Lem!" cried Barkshire surprisedly, "I thought you'd be the first to do so. You've been sighing so of late for the glimpse of a petticoat, and threatening to make up to one of the half-caste railway girls."

"Quite true," retorted Lemman quietly. "And I tell you fellows what: I mean business by the girl—that is, if she at all suits my fancy. If she does, and reciprocates, I shall just put pride—proper or improper—into my pocket, and marry her straight off. I cannot afford to run home on half-pay, and my furlough is not due till late next year."



I'm sick of bachelor life, especially in a hole like this."

In due course, Mrs. Gaynsborough, child, and nurse arrived at Khaishputtun. Mary Stroud—a handsome girl of about twenty-five—soon became evident, and those four fellows literally haunted her. Though Mary's speech savoured of the "Cockney," though she was fairly free-and-easy in her comportment, she did not lack discernment. She speedily analysed the intentions of the quartette: she did not take long in realising that three of them were *flâneurs*—pure and simple, who would ruin her as soon as look at her; but she understood that Lemman's attentions were serious and honourable. So she made her choice, with the result that in a couple of months Mary Stroud became Mary Lemman—to the huge discomfiture of Messrs. Barkshire, Portreeve, and Mincher.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE SOLDIER'S WIFE

TIME was when Mrs. Thomas Atkins exhibited quite a different personality to her successor of the present. In those days, our defenders—under the long-service system, together with the longer term of duty in India—made the regiment their home, and regarded the return to Britain as problematical ; for it often happened that when a corps was reaching the end of its stay at a station, and expected to be sent home, it would either be told to stand fast, shifted to another garrison, or packed off to take part in one of our little wars that from the very outset of our occupation have filled up the intervals between more important campaigns, and which even now form the chief feature of Indian military life.

On our first going out to India, we recollect seeing the then 102nd Royal Madras Fusiliers, with many grey-haired privates in the ranks, soldiers of perhaps fifteen or twenty years' standing. A large proportion of all grades were married and family men, so that the quarters set apart for them constituted no inconsiderable portion of the barrack accommodation.

The wives—or “women,” as they were collectively styled—put on their “best clothes” only on high days or Sundays ; even then, the attire of the “flashiest” was plain in comparison with what is now in vogue with the Soldier's Wife. The hair would be

neatly smoothed in front, and plaited at the back of the head ; a straw bonnet—no hats except for young unmarried girls—with a ribbon round the crown framing the face unshaded by a veil ; cotton gloves ; a simple chintz or muslin gown, straight up-and-down, gathered at the waist, and just touching the ground ; sleeves severely cut ; the stockings always white, and the country-made boots or shoes, thick-soled, square-toed, and low-heeled. In more temperate places, during the cool weather this attire would be supplemented by a shawl of some check pattern, thrown over the shoulders, and fastened at the neck with a jet or pinchbeck brooch ; while for jewellery, the wedding hoop and one or two “brummagem” rings completed the lot.

The Soldier's Wife would be met out for an evening airing, with her children—she carrying the baby ; and, if accompanied by her husband, he with the next toddler on his shoulder. Seeing a carriage coming, with perhaps an officer in it, the man would ground his burden—to allow of saluting ; and if this carriage chanced to contain any lady of the regiment as well, the woman would follow up her husband's salute with a curtsy.

The indoor “rig-out” of the Soldier's Wife of those days might be called almost primitive—corsetless, petticoatless ; consisting merely of a chintz skirt and a loose white calico jacket, the sleeves in a chronic state of tuck-up to the elbow, and the feet, often stockingless, thrust into slippers—for she was no idler, and did most of the domestic housework with her own hands. When she went out shopping to the bazaar, she would leave the children in charge of a sister-wife, protect her head with a huge Sarah-Gampish umbrella,

and followed by a *cheerreekee cootty* or pariah girl armed with a basket for carrying home her mistress's purchases.

Now, it is altogether different; for the Soldier's Wife in India vies with—and often excels—the ladies of the station in point of show, fashion, and even taste in her outward adornment. She not only apes the garments of chic Mrs. Colonel This and Mrs. Captain That, but outdoes those fair leaders of local *ton*. The flightier Mrs. T. A. delights to be taken—mistaken, rather—for her social superiors: she knows that if she is seen walking in public with her husband, that gentleman's sombre khaki uniform and ugly motor-bus-cad's cap gives the game away, and proclaims her to be “some woman from the barracks,” as Mrs. Major What's-her-name will contemptuously remark to Mrs. Lieutenant So-and-so, as they drive past her. However, the more sensible modern Soldier's Wife, though perhaps equally extravagantly prinked out, does not mind what the “carriage folks” think of her: she is proud of being seen with her “man,” and has no pretensions to be what she is not. On pay-day, she indulges in a hack coach, and, unlike her predecessor above described, she is driven on her shopping errand, and brings back her supplies in the coach: she would not be seen on foot during the middle of the day at Europe-shop or bazaar with a basket-armed pariah girl hanging on to her, “not for Joe.” She is a great wheel-woman. The machines are on hire at most stations, and you behold her at all hours pedalling here, there, and everywhere—to the Band, to the gymkhana of evenings, or any other gathering. She likes bicycling, because the propulsory action exposes

her dainty barred shoes and open-work silk stockings to the admiring gaze of those passers-by who can appreciate such seductive objects ; while the pose on the saddle accentuates the various curvilinear prominences of her figure. When she sorties during the heat of the day, she wears a "merry-widow" pith monstrosity, with voluminous veil to suit tied under her chin ; while when the sun has sufficiently declined, she is seen well-nigh extinguished under one of those other monstrosities, yclept hats, loaded with nodding plumes, top-heavy with flowers, ribbons, bows, murderous hat-pins, and what not else. So far, the extremities ; the rest of her is all *en règle*, from the elaborate trimming of her bodice to the attenuation of her hobble skirt. Weldon's and kindred feminine fashion papers now pervade India : she takes them in, studies them, and acts on them. How can she afford all this finery ?—for, as a rule, she is virtuous, and does not make money by immorality. Well, the solution is that in these days of short service and boy-soldiers, few in the ranks below sergeants are married men ; so we can take it for granted that the overdressed "woman from the barracks" owns some gallant "three-striper" for husband. His pay is much larger than that of the mere Tommy private ; besides which, the sergeant frequently holds some sort of regimental appointment, with pickings attached—especially if he has anything to do with the pay, the canteen, the victualling, the clothing, or the conservancy departments. Contractors, you know, will be contractors, and the sergeani—fine soldier though he be, with medals from Soudan to South Africa—is, after all, a human being. In spite of this

almost universal craze for “dressiness,” some of the Soldiers’ Wives in India manage—by exercising thrift in other directions—to put by money every pay-day ; so that when the time comes for the husband to “go,” she has a nest-egg at hand to set up house in the old country, and commence a new life while she and her “man ” are yet in the prime of their years.

## CHAPTER XIX

### “ PERDITA ”

“ Make no deep scrutiny into her mutiny.”

PITY her, reader. Of all our countrywomen in India, “ Perdita ” calls for your passive—if not active—sympathy. She may owe her lapse to her own indiscretion ; she may be the victim of man’s lust ; she may have bartered her virtue for gold : still, whatever the cause, there is always the other side of the question to consider ; and if we go contrary to the spirit of the line above quoted, the probabilities are that most of these cases are attended with extenuating circumstances—in favour of the poor outcast.

Without touching on the shoals of “ unfortunates ” who, under “ The White Slave Traffic,” are brought out chiefly from South-East Europe to the Presidency and a few of the larger Indian cities, we purpose dealing with those of our own nationality, one or more of whom are found at the bigger up-country cantonments. She may be a lady by birth and education, who, having erred, and then figured in a divorce suit, is prevented by various reasons from returning home ; who, with her finer feelings dulled, and deserted by her undoer, casts all other considerations to the winds, makes for some garrison station far removed from the scene of her degradation, and regularly sets up as “ a woman of pleasure.” Again, she may be a girl

of inferior social extraction, unmarried, seduced and abandoned by him whose specious assurances caused her to look for ultimate marriage ; a scoundrel who turns a deaf ear to her when, on realising his falseness, she implores him even to "protect" her—for, being in a strange country, dishonoured and friendless, whom else can she seek succour from ? This—in the early blush of her shame and perplexity ; but in a short time, when she finds no other resources, and the first feeling of remorse wears off, she also goes down the broad path which, while leading to destruction, at all events tends to giving her a roof over her head and food for her sustenance, all wages of sin though she earns.

That little bungalow at the junction of Park and Artillery Roads had long been vacant because its last tenant, a European, died of cholera in it. When Mrs. Vean—the "Perdita" of the chapter—first arrived, and as usual went to the travellers' bungalow, she inquired for small houses ; and after viewing several, selected this one, caring nothing for the cholera story. The rent was low, the situation suitable, while the building itself stood retired from the road ; so the next day she purchased furniture, engaged an indoor woman servant, and took possession. These preliminaries accomplished, it was time to break ground, as her store of money would require replenishing. She had privily ascertained from the travellers' bungalow female sweeper that there were no European "ladies of easy virtue" in the place ; the field was consequently open to her. So, after settling down, she proceeded to "advertise" herself. She is a tall, fair,



well-built woman of about thirty ; and having brought her kit with her,—by permission of a soft-hearted though outraged husband,—she is able to attire herself attractively. The band-stand is not very far from her house ; next Band evening, therefore, she strolled down to the rotunda in the park, and sat on one of the garden benches. Of course she created remark : ladies lolling in their carriages focused the handsome, well-dressed stranger ; men glanced at her interestedly, wondering who she could be, and putting the question to each other.

Two officers in mufti drove up together in a dog-cart, and slackened pace as they turned in to the circle surrounding the band-stand.

“ Halloa ! ” muttered one, espying the solitary lady on the garden seat ; “ some new-comer. Who can she be ? ”

“ Where ? ” inquired Captain Camden, the other, himself a comparatively recent addition to the place.

“ There, by herself on the bench, with the figure, and that bottle-brush affair sticking up out of her hat.”

Camden looked, then suddenly pulled up, con-signed the reins to his companion, and murmuring something about “ Think I’ve seen her somewhere,” told his chum to drive on, that he would rejoin him later, alighted, walked across to the bench, and lifted his hat.

“ Mrs. Beathe, is it possible ? ” he exclaimed with pleased surprise, halting before her.

Mrs. Beathe, *alias* Vean, glanced up nervously at him, coloured, looked round, and then rising, whispered, “ I am Mrs. Vean here. I am glad to see you, Captain Camden ; but this is too crowded

for us to converse. Find a quiet spot somewhere, as I am new to the place, and—and—we may have a deal to talk about.”

“Certainly, but why are you under another name ? ” he queried, in a tone of mystification.

“Hush ! You will know presently.”

In a few minutes they had moved out of the crush ; their going off in company being productive of much comment and remark.

“Let’s see,” resumed Camden pleasantly, when quite out of earshot. “The last time I had the pleasure of meeting you was over a year ago, at Rainuggur, while I attended the manœuvres there ; and the night before I left, you gave me several dances at the Cavalry Ball. By the way, where is Beathe ? and how is he ? ”

“Have you not heard ? ” she murmured.

“Heard what ? ”

“That—that—he divorced me ? ”

“Divorced you ? ” ejaculated Camden, starting as if he had been shot. “So that’s why you have adopted a pseudonym ! But it was not in the papers ! ”

“No : I believe Major Beathe took steps to prevent it appearing.”

“Good heavens ! And—and—did you—er—give——”

“Yes ! I did give him cause. It is no use my beating about the bush. Do you remember Mr. Haggerston ? ”

“Of the Survey—up there ? and—and—with whom—now I think of it—you were rather chummy ? ”

“Yes. Well—er——” And she turned away her head, sobbing.

“ I see, I see,” rejoined Camden reflectively, realising the truth. “ And your husband ? ”

“ He divorced me, as I have said. When the discovery was made, followed by the decree, Mr. Haggerston, like the reptile he has proved himself, ran away home, and has returned my letters unopened, which shows the nature of the love he professed for me, and his pie-crust promises to marry me on getting the divorce. My husband, however, was very generous : he gave me some money above my steamer fare home, and allowed me to take my clothes and other personal property. His last words to me were, ‘ Go in peace,’ ” she concluded, with a sigh.

“ Humph ! And why have you not gone home ? ”

“ Can you ask it ? How could I—after what has happened—face my people ? ”

“ Then what are you doing here ? ” queried Camden, becoming fogged again.

Diverging to a secluded bench, and motioning him to sit beside her, she told him all : her husband’s attentions to another woman ; her own sin—committed partly to revenge herself on him ; the heads of the legal proceedings ; her perplexities, her struggles, and her final decision to become what she now was. “ In fact, I am ‘ Perdita,’ ” she faltered, with a lump in her throat and tears in her eyes. “ True, a life of dishonour is before me ; but what alternative is there ? I am branded, and even did I know some profession or calling which might earn me an honest livelihood, who would employ me ?—for my story is sure to leak out sooner or later. I have no friends here. Some at Rainuggur, I dare say, would have been kind, but I was ashamed to

remain there among them—ashamed to return home to my parents. Fate has thrown me across you in this place ; you are my only acquaintance. Will you befriend me ? ”

“ Too glad—if you will say how,” observed the unsuspecting Camden.

“ Well,” she replied, her voice hardening, “ tell your men chums that—that—I am here.”

“ As Mrs. Beathe ? ”

“ N-no ; as—as—‘ Perdita.’ ”

“ *Haud ignara mali miseris succurrere disco*,” said Camden to himself as he called to mind his own misfortunes, his own sins ; and thinking that as this woman had verily and indeed burnt her boats behind her, the best way to answer her appeal was—to comply with her request. Poor thing !

but not to fold their hands in idleness ; for Bra is actively employed on the Municipal Comr Board, while his wife, a general favourite everyone, has plenty to occupy her time in her several hobbies and in doing real good-too, without ostentation. They have ample on ; their two girls are happily married, and, in and-Joan fashion, the couple lead a life of so and contentment. They have been here for years—the oldest residents, in fact ; but Brighton is commencing to show the weight threescore, the wife—nearly two decades you is still in a mellow prime, and is one of the 1 spirits of the station. Their bungalow faces of the regimental messes ; and on guest nights the band plays, Mrs. Brighton—who loves n comes out into her veranda to listen till the gramme is through. Not so her husband being an early riser, is in bed by the “ second p

It was one of these guest nights. The band playing the National Anthem, had tramped o Mrs. Brighton was about retiring when she angry voices emanating from the mess-house pound opposite. She listened ; then, realising a quarrel in earnest was going on amongst s the officers, she quickly walked across in the light—to find several young fellows around others, evidently the disputants, and, judging their speech, all more or less “ squiffy.”

As the lady approached, unnoticed, the two cipals threw off their mess jackets and assumed fighting attitude.

“ Mr. Kentville !—Mr. Tay ! ” she exclaimed satirically, gliding swiftly between them, “ be like a couple of East-Enders ! And you,” she

to the others, "encouraging and countenancing them ! What do you want to fight for ? "

They all stared uffishly, surprised at her sudden appearance, and made no reply.

"Look here," she resumed kindly, "if you fight, the Colonel is sure to hear of it, and you will get into trouble. As you are—er—not quite yourselves just now, take my advice : sink your differences and go home. A sleep over it will no doubt calm you down. Come, I know you live close by ; so, to prevent you from falling out by the way, I will see you to your respective gates. To you," she continued, addressing the rest, "I say, go home, and mention nothing about this to a soul." And putting herself between her charges, she grasped an arm of each, and trotted them off "like lambs."

She had her reward. The next morning, who should walk up the drive but Kentville and Tay, with their arms linked !

"We have come to thank you, Mrs. Braughton," commenced Kentville, as the lady met them in the veranda, "for stopping our nonsense last night."

"Confounded nonsense, too," grinned Tay sheepishly. "It was all about whether Mrs. Gurlick dyes her hair or not : Kent said she didn't ; I said she did. I'm sorry to own that—that—we had taken an extra peg after dinner, so we agreed to fight it out ; and we would have got into a good old row but for you, Mrs. Braughton. We are awfully obliged to you."

Old Sopnutt of the Railway came running one evening to the Club in a great state of fluster. It was rather late, and only a few—Mrs. Braughton

among them—still lingered over the home papers arrived by that day's mail.

"Is Persse here?" gasped Sopnutt in a gurgly voice, staggering up the steps.

"No; gone home!" cried Mrs. Braughton, guessing why the doctor was wanted, and at the same time noticing that all was not right with Sopnutt. "But I'll send word to him; so just sit down, Mr. Sopnutt, and recover your breath. Peon!" she continued in a whisper to one of those useful servitors standing by, "run to Dr. Persse's; tell him from me to go to Mrs. Sopnutt's, and take the *dhai* (midwife) with him; also that Mr. Sopnutt is here. Run!"

The peon went off like a shot, and our plucky Good-all-Round Woman, who, with innate acumen, saw what was coming, hastily unbuttoned Sopnutt's collar and, with the aid of some servants, laid him on a sofa mattress flat on his back on the ground; further, loosened his clothes, told a man to pull the punkah, and snatching the large wooden paper-cutter off the table, managed to insert it between his teeth; for she knew that Sopnutt had been seized with an epileptic fit, and she had sufficient confidence in herself to do the needful. The lethargic stage followed the convulsions; he sank into a stupor, and did not awake till far into the night, when Persse arrived. The doctor had successfully played his part with Mrs. Sopnutt: "A fine boy," he whispered to Mrs. Braughton, who, when Sopnutt had sufficiently revived, imparted the good news, and then drove him home. But for the lady's versatile handiness, God only knows what might have occurred.

Thus, by acts and deeds like these, too numerous

to describe in more detail, did Mrs. Braughton gain for herself the title of Good-all-Round Woman. Her courage was the most prominent feature of her character, and she had given many proofs thereof : but recently, when Palliachi's touring circus visited the station, and brought with it quite a novel attraction in the shape of an aeroplane, and after the ring performance, when the aviator, having made a preliminary flight, swooped back, and offered to take passengers, one at a time, everybody said " No, thank you," excepting Mrs. Braughton, who went up and came down smiling—much to the stupefaction of all the spectators.



## PART III

### CHAPTER I

#### THE PRESIDENCY CITY

POOR old Calcutta is out of it ; young Delhi is still in embryo ; Madras, besides being “one-horse,” is the “benighted” : so we will take Bombay, the “Queen of the West”—indeed, the premier city of the Indian Empire.

Except for the muggy heat during most part of the year,—to be mitigated only when the sea-breeze blows,—the mosquitoes, *poochies* (insects), crows, pariah dogs, and natives, you might, when at Bombay, fancy yourself “in a city far beyond the seas, in a distant foreign land” ; for though English predominates, among the indigenes as well, the *coup d’œil* suggests the cosmopolite rather than British, while as for what globe-trotters are so fond of saying, “Bombay could be taken for a bit of London,” does not hold. The idea is soon dissipated, for it is but a comparative stone’s-throw from the Western magnificence of the Fort, and other choice districts, to areas of Oriental squalor and dirt.

At the present day, Bombay constitutes a peninsula which forms a harbour about twelve by five miles—considered one of the safest, most commodious anchorages in the universe. The city itself stands on an island, or what was once a group

of islands, now connected with each other and the mainland by railway viaducts and causeways. Although there still exist some abominable slums in the purlieus, the chief native bazaars are handsome and clean; while the parts devoted to European mercantile firms are spacious, and contain many splendid buildings. The Fort is the principal business quarter—both governmental and commercial; but it is a fort in name only, the walls having long since been dismantled. The Presidency Governor has two palatial residences—one in the suburb of Parel, the other on Malabar Hill. The wealthier Europeans live in select localities, far removed from “the madding crowd” and from “that irritating hum that wells from the bazaars.” In these days, however, the white man no longer has the pick to himself—the native “swell” has taken to encroach on districts that used to be sacred to our people; so now, your Member of Council, your Major-General Commanding, your Merchant Prince, live cheek-by-jowl with Cursetjees, Vittuldasses, Anundaraos, Curreemoollahs, Alibhoys, and such-like.

Much is to be seen in and about Bombay. Among the more noteworthy buildings you have the Cathedral, dedicated to St. Thomas; the University, the Mint, the Town Hall, the Telegraph, Public Works, and Post Offices, and the Victoria Terminus of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway; the Crawford Market, various institutions—charitable or otherwise; the Museum, the Yacht Club, the Victoria Gardens, with a small zoo—all of which, with many more, put the sight-seeing globe-trotter in his glory. As for objects of interest in the vicinity, the nearest is that somewhat

gruesome affair, peculiar to the predominating Parsee, the "Tower of Silence," where, in lieu of interment or cremation, their dead are deposited on iron gratings at the open top of the tower, and left there—to be torn of vultures and other carnivorous fowls of the air, till the debris either drops or is swept through the gratings into the dry well beneath. When this well requires clearing out, how the accumulation of corruption is disposed of, and who performs the unsavoury task, is a matter for conjecture.

The Vihar reservoirs, which supply the city with water, are on Salsette island, about ten miles as the crow flies, and are well deserving a visit. Caves of fabulous antiquity and legend abound: Kinnery, Bhorivli, Montpizir, Elephanta, and others; the last named on an island in the harbour called Ghordpooree or the Isle of Sanctity.

Malabar and Cumballa Hills, Chinchpoogly, Byculla, and Colaba are the more fashionable residential districts—in the order given; but, as already stated, no longer reserved for the *sahib logue* (Europeans).

Tram-cars, busses, hackney coaches, bullock bandies, motors, and bicycles pervade the city; all these modes of locomotion being extensively patronised by the indigenes of every degree. Electric lighting, lifts, flats, theatres, skating-rinks, recreation grounds for various sports, are numerous, for the Bombay natives have taken kindly to our national games. Refreshment-rooms, buffets, ice-cream shops, "soda fountains," meet the eye everywhere; while for hotels of all grades and tariffs—they swarm. Time was when the Bombay hotel depended solely on European pat-





NAINI TAL, LOOKING DOWN THE LAKE FROM MIDDLE CHEENA MALL.

ronage ; but now the “advanced” son of the soil, be he a Guicowar or a *puntojee* (clerk), puts up at it without turning a hair—and ay ! sits at table with the Nazarene and partakes of forbidden food in total repudiation of his caste tenets. In certain quarters there are “hells” galore ; “boozing kens” and gambling dens in the dock neighbourhood, which remind one of Shadwell, Wapping, and the West India Dock Road of London ; opium-smoking “saloons,” kept by Chinamen ; and away in the regions of Kamatipura and Grant Road a large colony—small town, in fact—of foreign prostitutes, hailing chiefly from South Russia and the Black Sea ports.

The trade industries flourish. Besides indigenous manufactures, there are many cotton mills, owned by wealthy natives or companies and run by European experts, the products of which are said to rival the home article in excellence.

One of the most noteworthy features of Bombay, and which at once strikes the observant bystander, is the heterogeneity of its people. We are within the mark in asserting that almost every country in the world is represented here. Loll in a hackney carriage by the curb in the European-shop quarter, while your wife is inside, say, a milliner’s, buying fal-lals : look and listen. The scene is kaleidoscopic ; the sound that of Babel, especially if your ear is attuned to foreign languages : for, quite apart from the minority of Europeans and Americans, you could almost say that treading the pavement before you are “Parthians, Medes, and Elamites ; folks from Mesopotamia, Judæa, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia,” besides many other nationalities. You see the occasional white man or woman, afoot, under an

umbrella or sunshade, threading a course through the dark-skinned crowds, who in these days will not make way for you, because they no longer regard you as members of a ruling race; the more sensible orthodox Parsee, sheep-faced, spectacled (as six out of ten of them are), in his national attire, and wearing the tall, retrogressing glazed head-dress; the unorthodox Parsee, pariah-ised by visits to Europe, and dressed exactly like us, escorting a bevy of Parsee girls of the period, quite *à l'Anglaise* except for the graceful *sardi* or silk body-cloth enveloping head, shoulders, and figure—(holding their own with the man, when by rights they ought to walk behind him)—talking loudly in English, sometimes in French; the fezzed Turk, the *loongeed* (turban-end hanging down the back) Pathan from the “Buffer State,” the Bhatia, the Goozeratee *Vanniah* or trader, the Bhonsla or Mahratta, the Scindee Hindoo and Mohammedan, the latter with a lacquered hat resembling an inverted Christian “topper”; the Moslem Khoja, the Ulema or cleric from the Deccan, the Bengalee Babu, the Purdaysee from Upper India, the fierce-looking Rajput, the almond-eyed Ghurka from Nepal—all mostly attired in white clothing, but with variegated *puggrees* or turbans, of colours so vivid as to make the eyes ache as they parade in an endless stream before you.

## CHAPTER II

### THE HILL STATION

ON the Bombay side are the Hill Stations of Mahableshwur, Matheran, Mount Abu, Puchmari; the Bengal Presidency—Punjaub, etc., included—has Murri, Massouri, Simla, Darjeeling; and Madras boasts of Ootacamund, Coonoor, Kotagherry, Wellington on the Neilgherry, and Kodaikanal on the Pulney ranges. These are the principal, from 2500 to 8000 feet above sea-level, and with commensurately low temperatures. These favoured spots much resemble each other: all are sanatoria, fashionable retreats from the purgatorial hot weather on the plains—at least for those who can afford it and are able to get away. Every summer they are resorted to by the various Governments, and they are also refuges for the sick. If a man is not bad enough to be sent home, the doctors pack him off to the hills; and if he does not recuperate there, does not “snuff out,” the hill medicoes order him to England, or on a sea voyage—to Australia and back, generally. Valetudinarians, people on leave, tourists, globe-trotters, fugitives from the infernal heat below, constitute the floating population of these resorts. The dwellers are for the most part retired Government officials, military and civil, or business men; they have bought house or other property, and settled down for all time. In addition to these better-to-do, you find a substratum of poorer folks—more women than men—who keep boarding-houses,



lodging-houses, or "take in paying guests," as they elegantly put it. Some of them are honest, and give you your money's worth; others are harpies, pure and simple, who "do" you and fleece you at every turn: so it is more prudent in the long-run to go to an hotel or take a house.

Grass-Widows flourish here, the naughty Grass-Widow making the Hill Station her rendezvous with some favoured swain. Take Ootacamund,—or "Ooty," as it is more popularly known,—the chief Hill Station on the Neilgherry range. The elevation is over 7000 feet above the sea, and the mean temperature below 60 degrees; warmer during the summer months, and often with frost and snow in the winter. The houses are more in the European style, with fire-places in each room; devoid of punkahs, and the many other contrivances for battling against the heat in the low country. The immigrant natives whom our presence has attracted from the plains occupy the same kind of huts as they have left down under: they feel the cold cruelly, and stipulate for warm clothes, blankets, fuel, and higher wages, before they will budge to follow you up there. The aboriginal hill tribes are all more or less independent of employment under the white man, being farmers or cultivators in a small way. They are interesting but very primitive people, having extraordinary customs and observances. They are divided into several communities, of which the Todahs, Karrambahs, Bud-dagahs, and the Iruliahs are the chief.

The heads of the Presidency Government flit up to Ooty every hot season, leaving executive understrappers at Madras to moil, toil, and get through the heat as best they can—a heat which,

from February to October, is well-nigh unbearable when the sea-breeze drops, as it frequently does.

Near Ooty is the tallest peak in the range, called Dhoddabetta, about 9000 feet high ; also a second giant almost as lofty, named Elk Hill ; while another notable sight of this kind is Murra Kurrthi, with a sheer precipice of quite 6500 feet. The neighbouring country is stocked with big game in the *sholaks* or patches of primeval forest, and smaller in the intervening uplands. This plethora of sport is a sore temptation to those invalids with a love of shooting who may be sent up on medical certificate, and who go out with a gun in anticipation of the doctor's permission. The following story tells of a man who tried this risky sort of thing, but fortunately with happy results :—

Fanner—a rather dull-headed, susceptible young fellow in a certain Governmental department—became badly smitten at first sight with a girl he met in the train while travelling up from Madras to the hills ; the young lady having that day landed at the former port, while Fanner boarded the train *en route*, and, owing to its crowded state, would have been left behind had not the girl, who was alone in a reserved coupé, allowed the guard to put Fanner in. They journeyed in company for about two hours, when Fanner had to alight. Both were reticent and shy : all that he learnt of her was that she had just come out to India, and was going to live at Ootacamund ; and all that she learnt of him was that he belonged to the ——— Department, and had to get out at a certain station, where his camp stood. They had not even ascertained each other's names ; but for all that she made a tremendous impression on him, and he, in his gauche way, tried

to do the polite and gentlemanly. Well, they parted; but the image of the fair incognita simply haunted poor Fanner. It was quite a new sensation this, for he had never been taken with a woman before; so when he got back to his headquarters, he applied for a month's privilege leave to the hills. The application was refused on account of short-handedness; but, determined to go, he began to "feel seedy," and successfully getting round the good-natured Civil Surgeon, obtained a medical certificate for three months' sick leave to Ooty—on half-pay, true; but, being comfortably off, he did not mind the loss. Though infatuated with the remembrance of the young lady, and leaving no stone unturned—which he dared to turn—to discover her whereabouts, Fanner, who was an ardent shot, had not been a week on the hills when, unable to fight against the *shikaree* (shooting) afflatus any longer, he quietly slipped out with his breech-loader, without asking or consulting the doctor, intent on knocking something over; for, as a matter of fact, there was nothing really the matter with him. He beat a *sholah*, and was leaving it when, to his surprise and consternation, he ran up against the Director of his Department—on the same errand as himself.

"Halloa, Fanner!" exclaimed the big man. "Your Superintendent reported to me that you were being sent up here on medical certificate; so what are you doing out with a gun?"

"Er—I—er—felt—er—so much better," commenced Fanner hesitatingly, "that——"

"That won't do," interrupted the other sternly. "Come to the office in my house to-morrow at eleven, and I'll talk to you about it. In the mean-

time, the sooner you go home—wherever it is—the better.”

Fanner felt himself in the proverbial hat. In fear and trembling he went, as directed ; but he could have been floored with a feather when, as he traversed the compound of the mansion, there, on the lawn, “ playing ball ” with the Director’s little son, he beheld, attired in a nurse’s costume, the girl who had so caught on to his heart. On seeing him, she gave vent to a few words of recognition ; but ere he could reply, the Director appeared at an open glass door and called him in.

To be brief, Fanner, in a state of perturbation impossible to describe, made a clean breast of the whole thing, and threw himself on his superior’s mercy.

“ A jolly good job for you, Fanner,” remarked the Director, in so altered a tone as to startle the young fellow out of his wits. “ I think marriage to a sensible girl, as this one is, would be your salvation, because—excuse me for saying so—you are a bit of an ass. Miss Ely told my wife about your railway journey together, and how nice you were—arranging her kit, and so forth. Fortunately for you, she is a gentlewoman, although in a dependent position here with us. But as we do not wish to mar the girl’s prospects of domestic happiness, and if you think you can hit it off with her, go and tell your story to my wife ; and then, if Miss Ely will have you, why, take her.”

He did.

## CHAPTER III

### THE COAST STATION

THE view of Thulserry from the sea approach is not very inviting : a low, rocky coast-line, broken by an occasional bluff of red laterite ; a continuous fringe of palmyra and cocoa-nut trees ; patches of other greenery farther back, varied by open spaces showing bungalows of Europeans ; a *maidan* or plain—with barracks ; a dilapidated old fort on a projecting spit, exhibiting on a tall flagstaff the glorious *Semper Eadem*, the “ Banner of our pride ” ; then a bay—the anchorage, with a curving sandy beach, skirted by the densely packed native town, while in the hazy hinterland towers a range of lofty hills or *ghauts*. Your steamer casts anchor in the bay, where a few *pattimars* or country craft are straining at their fibre cables and wallowing in the swell : you land in an uncouth sort of canoe ; you charter the solitary bullock coach, waiting for a possible fare ; and, unless expected by friends, you are driven to that universal refuge for the destitute in Ind—the travellers’ bungalow.

In former days, Thulserry was the headquarters of an Indian Army Division, garrisoned by a full British, two native infantry regiments, and a battery of British Horse Artillery. Now, the Brigade Command has been abolished, and a mere wing of a sepoy battalion holds the station. The civilian element, too, has dwindled ; but the establishment of railway communication with other

parts of the Presidency has augmented its commercial importance. House property has of course depreciated: many bungalows that used to be occupied by officers of the large garrison—and fetching good rents—are fallen to ruins, and the few that are kept in repair can be had for a mere song. All told, our people number about fifty souls, including the gentler sex and children. They lead a dead-and-alive existence, eking it out with the usual club, tennis, and croquet; the monotonous morning ride or evening drive, with an occasional dinner-party, and a short spurt of make-believe friskiness at Christmas. Somehow, the sea air in India has a depressing effect upon us: you find our exotics to be far less comatose inland. The large garrison church is two-thirds empty on Sundays; the Chaplain looks down on a painfully meagre congregation, while his services for domestic occurrences are seldom if ever called into requisition. The one excitement—if excitement it can be styled—is the arrival of the up or down coasting steamer. When she is due, those people whose bungalows command a view of the sea look out, glass in hand, for the tell-tale smoke on the horizon, and watch the approaching ship with absorbed interest. Some may be expecting friends by her, others a box from home; this man going on furlough hopes his relief has not missed her; that girl knows that her fiancé is on board—and so on. If by evening she has not left, folks abandon all else and assemble at some coign of vantage to contemplate the vessel, while sighs go up, especially from those who, with dear ones far away, wish they were embarking on that dark hull bobbing about out there. There is generally a decent boat

of sorts available, either private property or on hire. Frequently, therefore, when a steamer is in, and weather conditions permit, a party of men sail out to the coaster—to go on board and “have a drink,” and take stock of any lady passengers. When a member of their little community leaves by the steamer via Bombay for home, then a whole crowd, in canoes and dugouts, accompanies the envied one to the ship. All board her; whereupon, as a rule, a good deal of hilarity is indulged in: champagne flows, “Auld Lang Syne” is sung, and it is not until the visitors are warned by the ship’s officers to retire that they reluctantly descend the ladder—perhaps not quite so steadily as they performed the upward climb.

Usually, sea-bathing is impracticable along the Indian coasts on account of the sharks and other dangerous denizens of the deep; so the more enthusiastic believers in the virtues of the briny adopt the safer *pis aller* of using it in their bathtubs. The following experience of a great friend in connection with Indian sea-bathing may be apropos the subject of this chapter:—

“Shortly after my transfer to a new district on the Coromandel, I was halting at a small fishing village, remarkable for an old but still habitable bungalow standing within a stone’s-throw of the beach. The house had been erected many years ago by some great civilian as a summer residence when the heat at his inland headquarters grew unbearable—for men in his position could do pretty much as they liked in those good old days of no railways or telegraphs. The reason of the civilian selecting this desolate spot was owing to

the facilities it afforded for safe sea-bathing ; and he must have been extremely fond of it, for my informants, the fishermen, repeated a tradition that the *Periah Dorai* (great lord) who built the house was in the habit of dabbling about in the water at all times whenever the tide went out. I say 'safe,' because all that part of the eastern coast is particularly notorious for sharks. Parallel with and about thirty yards from the shore ran a long, narrow reef, which, being exposed at ebb-tide, left a lagoon, so to speak, about fifteen feet deep between it and the beach. The water was clear, and you could see the firm sandy bottom—free of weed and rocks. Evidently, with a view of making his bath more secure, the civilian—so the villagers told me—had two stone groins about thirty yards apart thrown across betwixt the shore and the reef, high enough to show at low tide. I noticed that these groins had suffered from the wash of the surf, probably during storms, for some of the stones had been displaced from their crests. However, that did not trouble me ; the sight was too tempting. The tide was out ; the lagoon calm and clear as crystal. I loved sea-bathing, so resolved to have a jolly good dip that time on the morrow.

“Nearly down to the water's edge cocoa-nut palms grew in plenty, on which were perched numerous kites, watching for fish venturing to the surface, to swoop down, clutch their prey, and bear it off in their talons. While thus occupied, the birds made no clamour ; but I had seen these kites in other parts of India, and knew them to be a silent lot unless they spot a snake, a tiger, or some similarly uncanny creature, and then they raise a tremendous outcry.



“ Well, on the morrow, as soon as the tide had ebbed, and from the bungalow I could see the reef and groins above water, I decided to have my bath. Just as I was getting into my bathing-drawers the screaming of the kites caused me to look out, to see flocks of the birds wheeling about directly above the lagoon! Astonished,—for it was not a snake or tiger locality,—I huddled on some clothes, hurried down to the beach to ascertain the reason of the uproar, when, to my amazement, I saw a large shark swimming frantically about the enclosure, as if seeking an outlet! Probably the big fish had been close inshore during high tide, had floated into the lagoon, either over the reef or one of the groins, and mayhap had gone to sleep in the placid pool, awaking to find the tide out and himself caught in a trap. But for those birds, the chances are I should not have observed the shark: I should have plunged in, and it would have been all up with me. I forthwith assembled the villagers, who not only managed to net the monster, but enjoy a glorious feed off him too! ”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE UP-COUNTRY STATION

“Here we are, at Chuchkipore,  
And from it we shall stir no more ;  
But stay until we bid adieu,  
Dear Readers, unto all of you.”

THAT pestilent doggerel-slinger again ! But he hits off our *mutlub* (meaning, intention) fairly enough, for the remaining scenes of European men and women in India will be played out at Chuchkipore, the Up-Country Station of the chapter. William Shakespeare tells us that “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” First, then, a few words descriptive of our “stage” ; after which, a glance at the “players” who are to figure thereon.

In limning these pen-pictures of social life in India, we are backed by long experience, having served three decades in various parts of that much-abused and still imperfectly known country : while as for this Chuchkipore, we resided there for three years on end, so know all about it.

To begin with—the climate. Chuchkipore might almost be called a place oscillating between a hellish caloric and a refreshing coolness. From November to February the temperature is delightfully low—that is, for the tropics. About Christmas and New Year time, men fish out their home tweed suits, to wear them all day long ; women appear in their “tailor-mades”—actually sport their feather

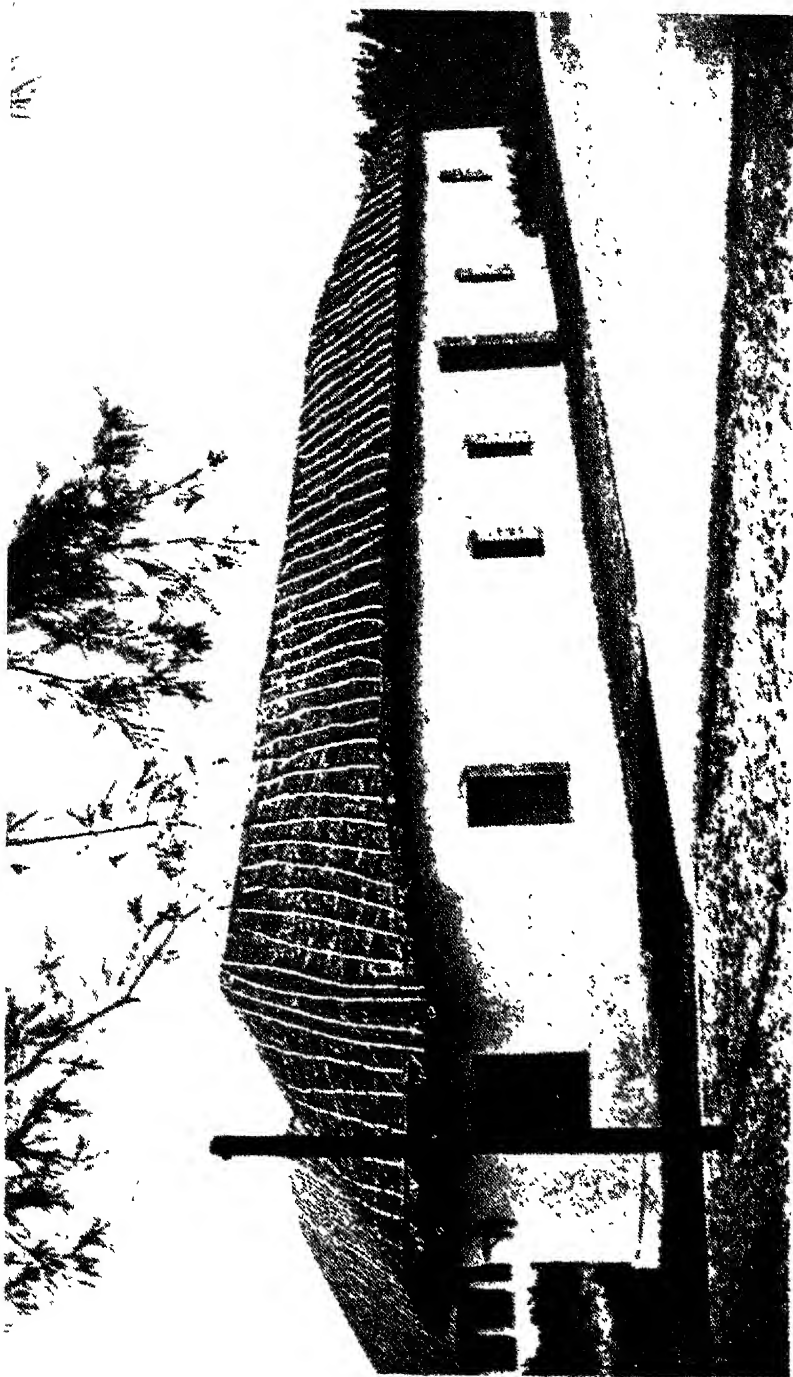
boas of an evening, and wrap themselves in cloaks and things when going to or returning from night entertainments. On the other hand, from March to October, if you are not grilling in an intensely dry atmosphere of 100 to 110 degrees shade reading, you simmer in a vapour bath not much below that range during the rains, which come down in torrents, and besides bringing with them an army of entomological pests, convert you, and all belonging to you, into a state of pulp; so if you do not keep a vigilant eye on your clothes, and constantly air them, they will irretrievably be done for by the muggy, all-pervading, all-penetrating damp.

There is one Europe-shop in Chuchkipore, run by a certain Mr. Jabbers, who professes to stock every want; and should, peradventure, you ask for anything out of the way, the urbane Jabbers—English fashion—offers to “get it for you,” from a packet of eyeless needles to a motor-car, warranted never to break down. A single native infantry regiment constitutes the garrison, with its usual complement of British officers, while the black coats graduate from a bloated Deputy Commissioner on fat pay to the insignificant drudges of the Uncovenanted Service. One Church of England and a Roman Catholic Mission chapel is all that is ecclesiastic about the place: a club, with a boarded dancing floor and small stage; a park or garden, where the band plays twice a week; and a swimming-bath, are the chief public institutions; with the nearest railway station ten miles to the south, but which, in response to recent agitation, will be shortly extended to Chuchkipore. The bungalows for Europeans environ the inevitable *maidan* or parade ground, which is girt with a shady road,

a foot-walk, and a sandy gallop—called by courtesy the Mall. The infantry lines are separated from the European quarter by a stretch of waste land, while the bazaar and native town lie still farther to the rear; the distance lending enchantment not only to the view but to the hearing. In the vicinity are several ruined forts and temples, rather interesting to visit, and provided with *topes* or groves, which afford pleasant spots for picnics and morning or evening rides.

Now for the Chuchkipore-ites. The place is garrisoned by the 215th Neogeese, a present-day class regiment, composed of a certain sect of supposed-to-be good fighting material. It is a fine corps, has seen a deal of service on the frontiers and elsewhere, and is commanded by Colonel James Boddikin, a quiet, unassuming man; one who has “smelt powder,” but is very much under the thumb of Mrs. Boddikin—somewhat his junior; handsome, childless, and the only Fast Married Woman in the station. The other men and women—those with whom we may have to deal, that is—are Major Marmlaid, second in command of the Neogeese: he is a grass-widower just now, and lives in constant dread of Mrs. Boddikin, who, as he describes it, “puts on” him; Captain Erksom, with a sentiment for Miss Ruby Gurder, the belle of Chuchkipore, sister of Captain Gurder, R.E., the executive Engineer, Gurder himself not being up to much—socially speaking; Nickey Peutter, a bachelor lieutenant, Mrs. Boddikin’s peculiar property; the Peter Parleys and Oskars, married subs, who, together with Surgeon-Major Gattable, the Civil Surgeon, finish the military, if we do not count Herr Neuweid, a waif from the Fatherland,

the band-master, who, though not a commissioned officer, is listed here because he will figure a little in these pages. For civilians of sorts, there are Slyce, the Deputy Commissioner; Mrs. Slyce, a pretty matron with several young children, who hates Mrs. Boddikin like poison; Ramskin of the Survey; Doalt of the Telegraphs; and Pontevedra, the Superintendent of Post Offices, with his wife, both of them somewhat swarthy,—“Goanesque,” as Peutter puts it,—but they are very sticklish on the subject of being regarded as pure Lusitanians. The Chaplain is the Reverend Leyton Stone, a Churchman of generous views; Mrs. Stone a nice, sensible woman, who, with her husband, are devoid of cant and humbug. Then there are two orphan sisters, Ursula and Vera Vallentine, daughters of a dead-and-gone Indian Army Colonel, who put them on Lord Clive’s Fund, which they now enjoy at the rate of £60 per annum each. They have a house of their own, and these legacies, together with the furniture, enable the sisters to live in modest comfort. During the time immediately following their father’s death, the Misses Vallentine, fairly attractive girls, thought it the thing to start on a goody-goody career—a false step, resulting, of course, in their being shunned and ostracised. But as years passed they found the game not worth the candle, so they dropped it; and being naturally light-hearted women, they fought their way back into the lap of Society—too late, however, for them to find husbands. They had faded; their bright chestnut hair became plentifully sprinkled with silver threads; while their cheerful dispositions had the effect of causing them to expand. So now no one, on serious matrimonial intent, will as



THE CLUB—PURI.









“SLEEPING OUT” IN THE HOT WEATHER.

much as look at them. Last come Fathers O'Shagus and Balduino, the Irish and Italian Roman Catholic Missionaries, whose work lies chiefly among the natives. Their reverences are by no means austere: they dine at Mess and people's houses; relish their wine or a "dhrap o' the craytur"; and are always ready to do good in their way, also to participate in whatever is going on. They are in general request, for the Irishman sings a rattling good song, and the Italian plays magnificently on the violin.

Fortunately, Chuchkipore does not boast of "a Scorpion," and except for an occasional passage of arms 'twixt Mesdames Boddikin and Slyce, the place is fairly clean of mischief-making and quarrels, though "a row" crops up now and again. *Voilà tout.*

## CHAPTER V

### THE STATION DURING A "BIG-WIG" VISIT

A NUMBER were seated by the tennis courts preparatory to starting play when the Slyces alighted from their wagonette and came across, both looking very "big."

"Fancy!" commenced Slyce, after doffing to the ladies, "Sir Patrick Aughrim, our new Commissioner, is taking Chuchkipore on his tour!"

"Yes!" added Mrs. Slyce, with an audible rustle of her silk underskirt, an article which Mrs. Boddikin had not yet gone in for, "and will arrive this day week."

"The devil!" muttered Colonel Boddikin uneasily. "He'll want a guard of honour, won't he?"

"M'no," laughed Slyce; "he must wait for that till he's L.G. (Lieutenant-Governor). But you'll have to instruct your fellows to present arms to him, and all that sort of thing, Colonel."

"Um—suppose so. Where will he stay?"

"Oh, with us, of course!—and whoever accompanies him," cried Mrs. Slyce, with a covert glance of triumph at Mrs. Boddikin.

"Don't you feel all-overish at the prospect Mrs. Slyce?" remarked Mrs. Boddikin sweetly.

"Wouldn't you—if you were going to put up the General?" retorted the other, with equal mellifluence.

"Oh, I don't know: I'd not bother. If he

didn't care for what I gave him, he could leave it—that's all."

"What!" shrieked young Mrs. Peter Parley—"if the General was coming to stay with you, Mrs. Boddikin?"

"Ay! the Chief, for that matter All one has to do is to be nice, and feed them well."

"But see here, Slyce," put in Gattable, the medico, "some of us will have to meet the Commissioner at the railway station—eh?"

"Rather! Only the heads of departments, though."

"Hang it!" growled Captain Gurder, R.E., in executive charge of ways and works, "I shall have to patch up the road: it's a bit ratty just now."

"You had better see to it sharp, Gurder," replied Slyce.

"Who are to go?" queried Boddikin.

"You, Gattable, Gurder, Ramskin, Doalt, Pontevendra, and myself; leaving this in time to meet Sir Patrick, who comes by the ten a.m. mail."

"What about breakfast?" asked Mrs. Stone.

"Have it here, when we get back," said Slyce.

"That would never do," objected Marmalaid—"to give them a ten-mile drive on empty stomachs. There's no refreshment place; so the best way is for one of our ladies to arrange a breakfast in the waiting-room. Look better, don't you think, than getting the Mess or Club to do it?"

"I can't," remarked Mrs. Boddikin languidly.

"I would," snapped Mrs. Slyce, "only that I shall have quite enough to do at home, preparing for them. It must be one of the ladies, though; so, Mrs. Stone, could you manage it?"

"I?" laughed Mrs. Stone. "A breakfast for a

dozen, perhaps, ten miles from the base of operations? I'm afraid I've not the resources."

"Oh dear!" cried Mrs. Slyce, looking round perplexedly. "Mrs. Oskar, and you, Mrs. Peter Parley, would no doubt say the same thing?"

"Hah, hah!" chortled Mrs. Oskar, speaking for both, neither of them caring much for a "civilian swell," "the idea, Mrs. Slyce, of two 'subs creatures' venturing on such a big business!"

"Mrs. Pontevedra, then, will you?" demanded the Deputy Commissioner's lady, turning to the Postal Superintendent's wife, and startling her.

"Oh my!" she exclaimed, taken off her guard, and lapsing into unmistakable *chee-chee*, "I should like; but whaat Commissioner thinking when I giving breakfast instead of senior ladies, eh?"

"Good gracious, what an accent!" murmured Mrs. Boddikin to the faithful Peutter, who winked appreciatively.

"Then what *are* we to do?" wailed Mrs. Slyce.

"Shall *we* see to the breakfast, Mrs. Slyce?" queried Miss Vallentine.

"Will you? It may look queer, because you are not married people; but then, anything better than passing it on to the Mess, which would be so tea-roomish, wouldn't it? Let me know the cost, Miss Vallentine, and I will pay you."

"Thanks," simpered the spinster sheepishly, "because we couldn't afford it ourselves. But the furniture, crockery, and so forth? They cannot be hired here, you know."

Boddikin would have volunteered to supply these did he not fear his wife. He was aware that she galumphed over Mrs. Slyce's dilemma; nevertheless, he winked at Marmlaid, who "twigged" it at once.

"Oh, don't fret about the kit, Miss Vallentine," put in the Major. "Give me a list of your requirements, and I'll send them over from the Mess," furtively glancing at Mrs. Boddikin, to find her regarding him with a stony stare.

"Then that difficulty is overcome," resumed Mrs. Slyce relievedly. "Any more?"

"How about getting the things there?" queried Miss Vera.

"I'll send you half a dozen hospital ambulance bullock carts," observed Gattable, who was not in a funk of the Colonel's wife. "There's no use for them just at present."

The ensuing six days were passed in active preparation, sweepings, and garnishings—from the furbishing up of the solitary church bell to the policemen's coat-buttons. The day came: the reception party went down, preceded by the Misses Vallentine and their fixings in the ambulance bullock coaches. The guests arrived; the breakfast was a success; and after everything going off well, the big man, with his escort, left for Chuchkipore.

Sir Patrick Aughrim, I.C.S., C.I.E., C.S.I., etc., is a good-looking Irishman; full of Hibernian humour, urbane, affable, but with a certain sense of the dignity of his exalted position and numerous honours. He had been recently transferred to these provinces, and now, accompanied only by his private secretary, he was making an informal tour of his new charge, unexpectedly including Chuchkipore in his itinerary.

Sir Patrick being *de facto* local representative of Government, all grades were bound to treat him with respect, although he was popping on them at

short notice. Oh, the task, therefore, of smartening up and getting ready during that week!—Colonel Boddikin with the military matters, and Slyce with the civil; even to the Rev. Leyton Stone, who, catching Gurder on his completion of repairing the railway feeder road, persuaded him to have the church touched up with whitewash. His reverence, with an eye to minor details, noticing that his East Indian church clerk wore frayed collars, advanced the old man a portion of his pay to buy some new ones at Jabbers's. The Roman Catholic Missionaries, hearing that the new Commissioner professed that faith, girded up their loins, determined to make capital out of Sir Patrick for the benefit of their vineyard; while all the others, men and women, were more or less harassed and exercised, not excepting Jabbers, who dressed his counters—he had no windows to speak of—afresh for the occasion.

Mesdames Boddikin and Slyce, burying the hatchet *pro tem.*, forgathered and organised a series of dinner-parties turn about at their own houses; for all the others were of too small calibre to think of such a function, but who, however, would be invited to meet Sir Patrick. And oh! the worrying among the fair sex generally with regard to attire; the frantic rivalry in securing the only good *mem-sahib's* (lady's) tailor in the place; the unpacking of garments and their accessories dormant for ever so long; the consultations; the unpicking, the re-trimming; the raids on Jabbers's shop—all, all was pandemonium so long as the Commissioner's visit lasted; and many a sigh of relief was heaved when Sir Patrick at length turned his back on Chuchkipore, with an intimation of coming again during a cold-weather round.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE STATION IN HOT WEATHER

PHEW ! the very idea makes one feel clammy, as if the pores of one's skin were about to exercise their office in the manner they used to do at the Station in Hot Weather.

The cold season wanes ; the temperature gradually rises, the face of Nature changes, and a sensation of bodily discomfort are the premonitory indications of the approach of the dreaded hot weather. You begin singing out for the punkah ; you have the venetians closed against the increasing glare ; you discard tweeds ; the mere sight of your table attendants, still in their winter *chupkans* (long cloth coats, provided by you), makes you exude : you crossly suggest their donning white ; and when they respectfully demur, saying that it is yet cold, you want to shy something at their heads. An irritating itching now asserts itself on your epidermis, especially in inaccessible situations ; it is " prickly heat," which will torment you till towards October next. You scratch and scratch ; but when you cannot reach the spot where the rash lacerates you with its fiery ticklishness, you jump up, rush to the nearest projection,—a door-frame, the corner of a wardrobe or bookcase,—and, emulating the Scotchman at the road finger-post, you rub yourself against it. Should this not cover the site of torture, you summon a servant, and vaguely implore him to *khoojow* or *shoorree* (scratch). The tingling is some-



where between the shoulder-blades, or in the bend of the small of your back, and you stoop forward accordingly ; but when that idiot starts scratching your head, your language is not of the choicest.

A conclusive hot-weather sign is the appearance of the *jhamp* or *tatty-wallahs*, a party of natives carrying bundles of split bamboo and bales of *cuss-cuss*,—the dried roots of a scented grass,—to be converted into rigid, closely-fitting screen-frames for your doors. These people, seated in your veranda, manufacture the screens in no time, carefully measuring each aperture, allowing no chinks, and thus supplying our chief defence against the heat. As soon as the cruel sun tops the horizon, your servants fit these screens to the doors, and from tubs standing in the verandas outside, previously filled by the *bheestie* or *aquarius*, an army of women, entertained for the purpose, keep the *tatties* saturated all day long by dashing water on them ; and these, blown on by the hot wind, modify the temperature within, filling the house with an aromatic fragrance—that is, while the fiery blast continues.

Other devices are resorted to for battling with the heat. Formerly, at notoriously hot places, our people used to excavate subterranean chambers beneath their bungalows, and pass the weary summer-time there in lamp-light. These burrows were known as *tye-khanas*, and from their position below ground-level were supposed to be cooler than the bungalow itself ; but they have gone out now.

Everyone has the *cuss-cuss tatties*, but some employ the “thermantidote,” a huge box containing a revolving fan, like a steamboat’s paddle. On each side is a window fitted with *tatties* ; these are kept moist, and the hot wind playing on them cools the

atmosphere of the box, which the whirling fan, worked by men at the exterior crank-handles, propels into the house through a projecting passage adjusted to an opening in the *tattied* door itself. Though every window is religiously shut, you further barricade yourself with coarse blankets hung against each, as non-conductors of heat. And so you remain the live-long day, whether in office or drawing-room, till the sun sets ; and then, when the domestics open the house to admit the outside heat, it is all but unendurable.

Night, if anything, is harder to thole than the day. No use trying to sleep indoors ; so you select some open space in your compound, erect a pair of timber posts, and connect their tops with a strong cross-pole carrying a great punkah. When it is time to go to roost, the servants bring out your bedsteads, place them under the punkah, and pin towels to the fringe, so as just to swing clear of your face. Then, with a garden watering-can, they sprinkle the mattress—bed-clothes, except a single spread-sheet, are quite out of the question—and by each bed they put a brimming earthenware tub, furnished with a long-handled spoon, to enable you, without rising, to scoop up the water and sprinkle yourself during the night. So you lie, taking sleep in snatches, till the gun fires at dawn, when you retire to the house, which, retaining the heat, resembles a veritable oven. Thus you go on from day to day, night to night, until the rains come, whereupon, as we have already stated, you slip from a state of roasting to one endless simmer, so long as the windows of heaven remain open.

The Hot Weather is in full swing at Chuchkipore,

and although a hill station is not far distant, our friends have not budged. Slyce cannot get away, owing to a threatened famine, and Mrs. Slyce will not leave her husband; but their children have been sent up to the sanatorium in charge of a lady friend. Mrs. Boddikin has not gone because Peutter could not. Ruby Gurder of course prefers the furnace of Chuchkipore with Erksom—who cannot be spared—to the hills without him. Mrs. Stone stays on because, like Mrs. Slyce, she clings to her husband. The Peter Parleys and Oskars suffer under a chronic state of *res angusta domi*, so they are there. The Vallentine girls cannot afford the trip; while Mrs. Pontevedra scoffs at the very idea of forgoing home comforts for the uncertainties and extortion of a hill hotel. Gattable, Gurder, Marm-laid, Ramskin, and Doalt are victims to “the exigencies of the Service”; while the Roman Catholic priests—well, a visit to the hills is not in their line.

It is late evening, and limp specimens of poor humanity sit under the Club veranda punkah, trying to pass the time till dinner-hour; for the least exertion is beyond the women, while the men think they have had quite enough exercise in the discharge of their day's duties.

“Oh, wasn't it an awful night!” murmured Mrs. Boddikin, joining the others. She is attired—we might almost say “un-attired”—in a flimsy diaphanous white nainsook, shoes and silk-mesh stockings of the same colour, her head and hands bare; while a marked alteration in her configuration shows that the heat has caused her to discard a certain article so indispensable to the woman who desires to be shipshape. Other fair ones are also

“under-rigged,” but not to the same audacious extent.

“Ay!” concurred Gattable, chuckling. “The sand-flies were in strength, weren’t they?”

“Indeed, yes! they have commenced in earnest. But that reminds me: we made rather an amusing discovery last night.”

“What?” came eagerly from all sides. Any trifle to break the all-pervading ennui!

“Well, you know that the Chuchkipore people are no good as night punkah-pullers, and we employ up-country immigrants. Hitherto, ours have given no trouble; but for the last night or two they have lagged, and also disturbed us by what sounded as if they were slapping each other. So yesterday I warned them—under pain of fine—to pull better, and make no noise. Last night all went well, and when my husband came to bed, before lying down he happened to notice at the end of the long pull-rope more figures than the usual three. Curious to find out, he went to the rope-end, and what do you think he saw?”

No one could say.

“Our three *Purdaysees* (up-country immigrants) right enough—one at the rope, the other two lying on the ground enveloped in their sheets. But just fancy! the fellow who sat on a box pulling our punkah was in turn being fanned with a palm-leaf by a local native squatted on another box by his side! The explanation given was that the up-country men, being unable to tolerate the sand-flies—to which they were unaccustomed—and fearful of being fined, had employed these local natives to fan them while they fanned us! Nickey!”—turning to Peutter,—“get me a lemon squash, with plenty of crushed ice.”

## CHAPTER VII

### THE STATION IN COLD WEATHER

THE Hot Weather has gone—also the monsoon. Chuchkipore wakes up to a spell—alas ! too short—of activity, and various diversions are set on foot. The gymkhana Committee draws up a programme of events which after some little wrangling is finally adopted, *nem. con.* ; the cricket team assiduously goes in for practice ; while the ladies plan entertainments such as “ feeds,” concerts, dances, picnics, etc. Jabbers circulates a notice announcing the arrival of new goods, imported direct from London and Paris—more probably from Bombay : nevertheless, his shop is well patronised by fair customers, from *mem-sahibs* (gentlewomen) to humbler Europeans and Eurasians. Herr Neuweid becomes a new man ; for, as he tells you, “ De headt ov dees kontrry eet me to floor throwsz.” You see him oftener now in the practice rotunda, with his Neogee bandsmen around him, tootling sundry passages, during which the Herr “ *Gott-in-himmels*” this clarionet, “ *Donner-wetters*” that cornet, accompanied with a rap of his baton over the chap’s dusky paws—and so on. The ladies, instead of lying, *ultra déshabillé*, inert and fretful, under punkahs in darkened rooms, are up betimes, join the men at early tea, mount their nags, go rattling rides, and return for *chota hazri* (early breakfast), their cloth habits unadorned with maps of continents, islands, etc., as when wearing their

hot-weather brown hollands. This *chota hazri* is a sociable function, especially if the hostess is popular. People drop in : muffins, poached eggs, sardines, potted meats, cake, fruit, tea, coffee, together with "pegs" for the men, are provided, and the assembly does not disperse till well on to breakfast-time proper. Then comes the inevitable diurnal "tub," the toilet for the day, the substantial meat-breakfast ; after which the men hie off to their duties at barracks or offices, while the ladies sit in their open drawing-rooms—prepared to receive visitors, or drive out on a round of "pea-cocking" themselves. By two, the tiffin or lunch hour, everyone is generally home. If you have no guests, a siesta follows, lasting to about five o'clock, when, attired for the evening's outing, you partake of tea, and then repair to whatever is "on." You return at dusk, when you again change—for dining out or entertaining at home. Whichever way it is, you do not go to bed till well towards midnight, healthily fatigued, and ready for sleep. The above is the usual routine—when nothing special is taking place ; but should there be, say, a morning ceremonial parade of troops, a cricket, polo, or football match during the day, tennis or badminton tournament in the afternoon and evening, then the ordinary arrangements become dislocated, for every soul feels bound to go and witness the fun—no matter the hour.

While the natives shiver, our people rejoice in the lowered temperature, and hail with delight the morning mists which brood over the earth till dissipated by a genial sun. In addition to driving about at all times of the day, with hoods down, our ladies, under pith hats, trip over on foot to

each other's bungalows, or down to Jabbers's shop. The militarios think nothing of passing hours together in the sun at the firing ranges—taking care, however, to have a supply of refreshers and smokes sent over from the Mess. The civilians sit in open offices, dispose of their work with a minimum of bad temper, and are always ready at this season to "shut up shop" early when anything particular in the shape of sport or amusement is on the cards.

One day, when Chuchkipore was to play polo against a visiting team, all turned up punctually at the ground except Ramskin and Doalt; and as both were crack players, their absence caused the greatest annoyance and astonishment, till a Eurasian police inspector came biking up from the public offices with a message from Slyce saying that the two missing ones were being unavoidably detained, and advising Erksom—the home leader—to take on substitutes.

"Substitutes be shot!" growled Erksom angrily, "when there's not another fellow in the place who can hit a ball!"

"Oh dear!" cried Mrs. Boddikin plaintively; "as Mr. Slyce is not here, he is evidently keeping them for something. Nickey," she continued to Peutter, who was hanging round her, "do gallop across and find out what's the matter!"

"Wait a bit," whispered Peutter; "here's Mrs. Slyce coming. She may know."

"I'm *afraid*," commenced the lady alluded to, before anyone could address her, "that Mr. Ramskin and Mr. Doalt will not be in time at least to begin the game, although they *may* be able to join in later on; so, Captain Erksom, try and get

two substitutes to act for them—even natives, say, from among the mounted police. They know something about polo. I see several of them in the crowd there.”

“ Might as well chuck the whole thing ! ” fumed Erksom. “ We’d not stand a chance without those two chaps. But what the—er—what’s keeping them ? and where are they ? ”

“ At my husband’s court-house,” explained Mrs. Slyce. “ The fact is, Mr. Ramskin and Mr. Doalt went out shooting early this morning, and unfortunately one of them peppered a native with small shot. They were obliged to fly for their lives, pursued by a crowd of villagers, who carried the injured man straight to the court-house, and set up a great howling for justice. My husband immediately sent for the two, and waiving all other work on hand, at once took up the case, so as to try and dispose of it before the polo commenced ; but there is such a cloud of witnesses, and so much evidence to sift, that up to a few minutes ago, when I called for Mr. Slyce, he had not finished.”

A silence of perplexity.

“ Your keys, Fred ! ” suddenly called Ruby Gurder at this juncture to her brother. Miss Gurder, be it remembered, was the belle of Chuchkipore, and did things that her less-favoured sisters could not attempt.

“ What for ? ” demanded the R.E., throwing her the bunch.

“ You’ll know presently,” she replied, beckoning to the *syce* (groom) to bring up her horse. “ Hold on all, till I come back ! ” she continued, climbing unaided into her saddle, and cantering away hard.

Surmise and conjecture : some said one thing,



some another, to account for the young lady's move ; while the brother was questioned, but to no purpose. Then, after an uncomfortable half-hour, Miss Gurder came careering back—accompanied by Ramskin and Doalt !

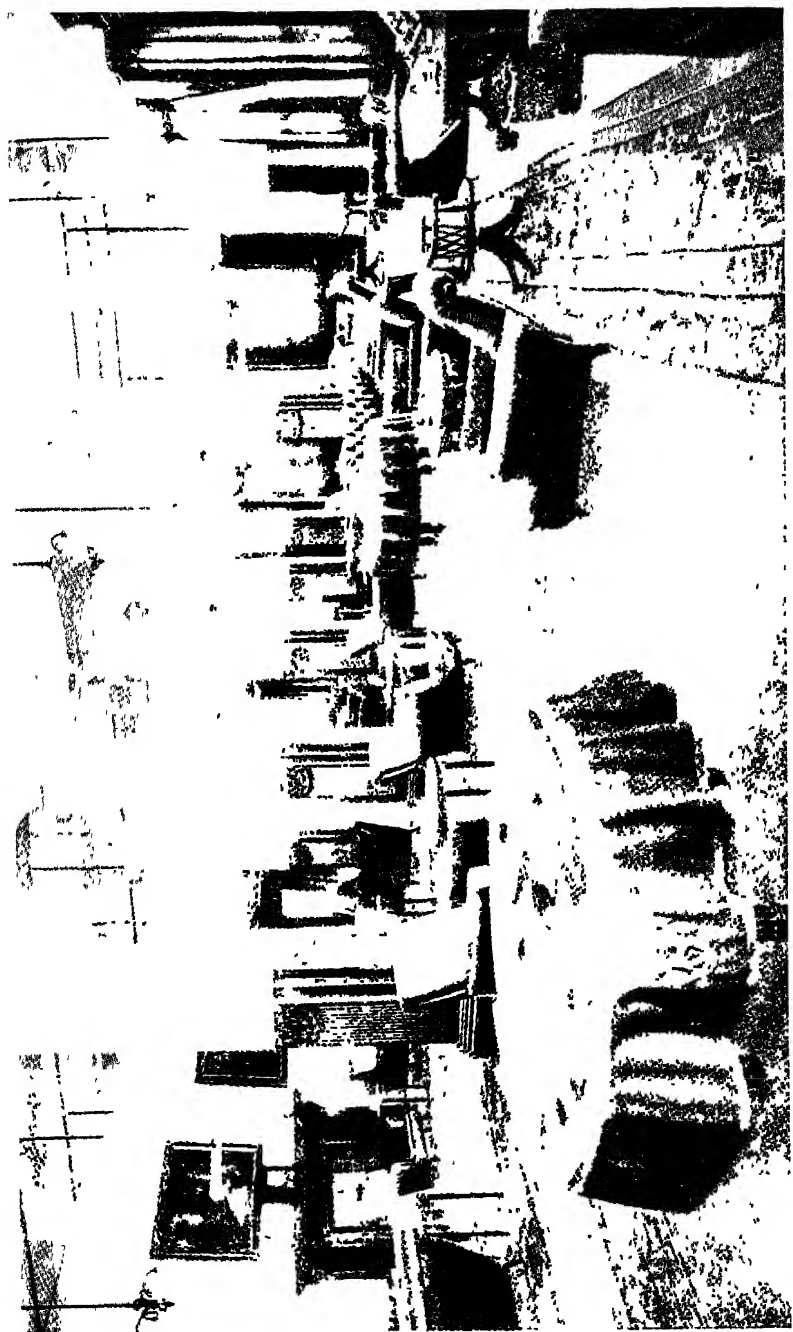
“ One sec. ! ” bawled the latter, as the two, having dismounted, hurried to the dressing-tent to get into polo “ tog.”

“ What on earth did you do ? ” whispered Erksom, catching Miss Gurder as she slipped from her horse.

“ The best thing possible under the circumstances,” laughed the girl. “ I took fifty rupees out of Fred's cash-box, rode on to the court-house, and by bribing the peons with ten rupees, got them to offer complainants the remaining forty to withdraw the case. Mr. Slyce likes me,” she said, with a merry glance at that gentleman's wife, who nodded smilingly in assent, “ and fathomed what I was up to; for when from his dais he caught my eye, and I winked at him, he winked back. As for the rest, it was easy.”

“ Well ? ”

“ Well, the peppered man, who had hitherto been lying on the ground, moaning and saying he was going to die, when he saw the forty rupees literally ‘ took up his bed and walked out,’ followed by his now silent companions—for really, the fellow was only slightly hurt. Mr. Slyce, announcing the case to be withdrawn, told the parties to clear out, ordered the court to be closed, and drove off, while I and the ‘ defendants’ just streaked it here. There ! you have it. Now, *do* start play ! It's late enough as it is.”



THE NEW BENGAL CLUB—READING-ROOM.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE STATION CLUB

THERE is a saying that where two or three English get together in a foreign clime—particularly India—they build a church and establish a club: the first to the honour and glory of God, and to ensure His promised presence in the midst of them; the second as an obligation to themselves—holding the one equally necessary for their well-being as the other. The church is God's house; the Club, a rendezvous where the exotics can meet on equal terms for social intercourse and relaxation. We say "equal terms," because the Indian Club is exclusive; only those who sit above the salt being enrolled—and that, too, by strict ballot. Given this, all other distinctions are cast aside: Major-General Smith and Commissioner Jones rub shoulders with Second Lieutenant Brown and Assistant Engineer Robinson. Socially speaking, the two latter are just as much *sahibs* (gentlemen) as the former; so it is all right. But no understrapper is admitted to membership; no one with a slur on his name, however otherwise eligible. Time was when "a touch of the tar-brush" precluded the man so tainted from getting into the Club, although his rank in the Service might be up to the mark; but now, Lord love you! not only are Eurasians accepted—and they at least have some lien on us in virtue of their partial co-sanguinity (to coin a word)—but the "advanced" educated native, who

grades level with the white man, is now to be seen at our Clubs throughout the Indian Empire. Some of us ask, "Why is this?" Others say, "Why not?"

The Station Club is governed by a local Committee, and run by a Secretary, generally an officer—military or civil—of the place. The post is honorary, and no sinecure; for the Secretary has plenty of work, which has to be done during his leisure from official duties. He has a deal to worry him—studying a variety of tastes, coping with a diversity of complaints, suggestions, and so forth. There is a card, a billiard, a reading, a drawing, and a dining room, either with one long table down the centre, or smaller ones scattered about; also retiring or dressing rooms for both sexes, with the usual annexes. The Secretary has an apartment for his office, adjoining which are the store, pantry, and other receptacles—the kitchen and servants' range being detached, well away from the main building. During the cold weather, the papers, magazines, etc., are distributed in the front veranda, a favourite lounge for the habitués; but at other seasons people ensconce themselves inside, under the punkah, behind *tatties*, or in the direct draught of therm-antidotes.

These details sufficiently apply to the Chuchkipore Club; they may tend to remind Anglo-Indian readers of the *unthur ghurs* (club-houses) of their own time in the "gorgeous East."

Gurder is Honorary Secretary; the current work during his absences—never for long on end—being attended to by the Club head writer or clerk. Gurder rubs along fairly well, in spite of his rather short temper; but when members put his back up by puerile complaints, or hanky-panky sufficiently to

Boddikin's intrusion would be to the men, and scenting a row of sorts, Ruby resolved to visit the Club later on. In the meantime, Mrs. Boddikin arrived, and invaded the billiard-room—to find the game in full swing, the place crowded with players and spectators. She noticed the sour looks that greeted her appearance ; but, nothing daunted, she smiled round and said sweetly, “So *this* is what you are up to ! I *thought* there must be something special on, so came to see for myself. What a shame you did not let it be known ! We could have all formed a gallery, and made bets ! However, do not let me disturb you. Get me a cushion, Mr. Peutter,” she added, to her friend,—the only one who was not frowning,—“and help me up into that corner, on the top bench.”

No more was said. The game proceeded, and in due course came the adjournment to tiffin, when Marmalaid—in duty bound—invited Mrs. Boddikin to join them.

“Oh no, thanks,” she replied nonchalantly ; “I have had lunch, so shall go into the reading-room and while away the time there. I must see to-day's sets through”—at the same moment darting a significant glance at Peutter ; a command to him to forgo his tiffin and attend on her.

The billiard-room emptied ; all streamed in to lunch except the lady and Peutter, who strolled away in the opposite direction.

“I say,” growled Gurder, after they had sat down ; “how did she get to hear of this ? ”

“Peutter, you bet,” observed Marmalaid, in angry *sotto voce*. “Bad taste on her part to come—I call it.”

“Bad taste of Peutter—if he did tell her,”

rejoined the R.E. "He must have, considering that none of the other ladies have shown. Confound it! to think we cannot get even a couple of days to ourselves! What the devil are those two up to, I wonder?" he added, after a pause.

"Go and see," suggested Gattable chucklingly.

"By gad, I will!" And rising from the table, Gurder made off—to return presently, looking black as thunder.

"I tell you what!" he shouted, dropping the door-*purdah* (curtain) behind him, "if the Club is to be made use of as—as—well, I won't say what, I shall just chuck the secretaryship!"

"Come, come, Gurder," protested Slyce; "draw it mild! What did you see—to put you into this white heat?"

"What did I see? Those two seated on a sofa—fooling. That's what I saw!"

Immediately there arose a "split in the camp." Some upheld Gurder; others condemned his language as intemperate, and so forth. Tiffin was cut short. They returned to the billiard-room—not to resume play, but to continue the argument; the hubbub lulling only when Mrs. Boddikin and Peutter shortly followed.

"Good gracious! what is the matter?" inquired the lady, struck by their unfriendly demeanour. "Why are you not playing?"

An uncomfortable silence, which would probably have been broken by a recrudescence of the dispute had not Ruby Gurder come in at that moment. She grasped the situation at a glance, and before she could say anything explanatory of her appearance, all—evidently regarding her as an arbitrix—began speaking at once, whereby the

girl gathered that Mrs. Boddikin was at the bottom of it, and that Gurder had offended her. So she took the indignant lady by the arm and led her into the empty drawing-room, resolving—with her usual tact and knowledge of the other woman's character—to quash the difficulty.

“My dear Mrs. Boddikin,” cooed the artful Ruby, “it all lies in a nutshell. Fred admires you immensely, and his jealousy of Mr. Peutter caused him to forget himself. I will tell him to apologise, so think no more about it. Better go home, while I give the men a talking-to, especially my brother. Take care of the step. There, that's it. See you at tennis this evening. Good-bye !”



## CHAPTER IX

### THE STATION DINNER-PARTY

APART from big concerted "feeds" at Mess or Club, the only people in Chuchkipore fully capable of giving a large Station Dinner-Party on their own hook are the Boddikins and the Slyces; for although the Deputy Commissioner's "screw" is far the greater, the Boddikins—on an occasion of this kind—can indent on the Mess for whatever they require—from extra glass, crockery, etc., to commanding the services of its *chef de cuisine*, who with *back-sheesh* in view, joyfully delegates his duties for the day to his underlings and takes supreme control in Mrs. Boddikin's kitchen. He has a preliminary interview with the lady, who dictates her menu; sundry items in which, however, the *chef* objects to—as infeasible, out of season, too commonplace, etc. etc. Then, when the bill of fare is finally decided on, that *chef* puts in so heavily for sauces, spices, relishes, ice, cream, eggs, and Heaven knows what not else, that the lady, after vainly endeavouring to cut him down, yields, and gives the fellow *carte blanche* to apply to her butler for all he requires, so long as the outcome is a success, which the *chef* somewhat sardonically but respectfully requests her to "wait and see."

The party is to consist of ten, including themselves, the Stones, the Gurdurs, the two Vallentine girls, Gattable, and—of course—Peutter. It often happens that, however intimate you may be with

your guests, some little difficulty crops up in correctly pairing them to go in to dinner ; for the least mistake in this respect is likely to give umbrage, because our people in India are very intolerant of any error on the subject of precedence. Should you be entertaining new arrivals or birds of passage, you must refer to Army Lists, Civil Lists, etc.—to ascertain if Jinks is senior to Hanky ; or what “ Q.E.D.” stands for against Panky’s name, and whether the letters carry any precedential weight ; or if the cryptic “ U.F.C.” after the Rev. Sandy Macduff’s cognomen gives that apostle a hoist above your own station chaplain, whose more intelligible “ M.A.” does not mystify you. Again, should you capture a titled globe-trotteress in the person of Lady Hashby de la Souche,—travelling round the world with a maid and factotum,—while Lady Powys Square—wife of your own Major-General Sir Powys Square, commanding the Brigade—is also of your party, you have to consult Debrett to discriminate betwixt the two : and so on, *ad nauseam*. With Mrs. Boddikin, however, and this particular spread of hers, the only question was as to whether Gattable, Surgeon-Major I.M.S., Civil Surgeon of Chuchkipore, ranked above or below the Rev. Leyton Stone, the Chaplain, and of the two, as principal gentleman, who should take the hostess in to dinner.

“ Mind, James,” she said to her subservient but rather dense husband, whose memory required jogging at times, “ you do not forget to tell off the couples when dinner is announced this evening.”

“ All right. Have you arranged them ? ”

“ Not quite. I’m uncertain about Major Gattable and Mr. Stone.”

"Uncertain? They've accepted, haven't they?"

"Oh, do not be so obtuse! Of course they have accepted! I mean—which of them takes me in?"

"Does it matter—unless you have a preference?"

"You idiot! Which of the two is the 'bigger bug'? Is that plain enough for you?"

"Oh, I see! Well, Gattable, I should say."

"But he's a bachelor, isn't he? Unless he has a wife tucked away somewhere."

"He's unmarried, I know. What difference does that make?"

"None, I suppose—unless for the fact that Mr. Stone, being a married man, and accompanied by his wife, should come before Major Gattable, shouldn't he?"

"Perhaps so. But, my dear Hilda, you understand these niceties more than I do; so say how you settle it, and I'll do the telling-off accordingly."

"Well, you and Mrs. Stone, Major Gattable and Miss Gurder, Captain Gurder and Vera Vallentine, Nick—er—Mr. Peutter and Ursula, Mr. Stone and I."

"M'yes; that's about it," adding, with a covert grin: "Peutter won't much care for Miss Ursula as a companion: she'll bore him, I expect, with her everlasting 'transmigration of souls.'"

"Why?"

"Oh, I don't know. One thing, he does not admire the girl: thinks she's too fleshy. Besides, he will find himself out in the cold."

"How?"

"Not being with you," remarked the Colonel, with a touch of unusual audacity.

"You are jealous of him, James!" she exclaimed, anger in her voice.

"Have I ever given you cause to think so, Hilda?" he remarked conciliatingly, fearful lest he had gone too far, and that her back was getting up.

It must be mentioned that, in the exercise of her domestic autocracy, the fair Hilda "kept the bag," devoting the greater part of its contents on her own outward adornment: and yet being prudent enough to steer clear of debt, she cut down expenses in other ways—employing, for instance, fewer domestics than her position warranted; so that, when entertaining, she was obliged to take on several temporary servants for the nonce—a measure often resulting in consequences the reverse of pleasant.

The evening closed in: the guests arrived; the dinner-hour came—and went. People consulted their watches, and conversation flagged. Mrs. Boddikin, catching her husband's eye, pointed with her closed fan towards the dining-room. The Colonel strode out to the empty back veranda and shouted, whereupon a procession of domestics, bearing dishes, came streaming across from the detached kitchen. Boddikin, after slanging the fellows in forcible *sotto voce*, returned to the drawing-room and gave his wife a reassuring glance; and presently the butler threw open the half-doors to announce, "Dinner ready, sar!"

In conformity with Boddikin's whispered instructions, they tallied on each to his lady, and moved in without a hitch. So far good, but soon tribulation began for the hostess. While the butler was otherwise engaged, one of the hired servants

whipped up a plate of cheese straws from the side-board and handed it round during soup ! Then, later, when Boddikin's dressing boy or valet—pressed for this occasion—proceeded to offer a glass dish of red currant jelly to those of the diners who had been served with roast mutton, one of the hirelings, in his ignorance, loudly checked the lad for presenting *moorrubba* (jam) with *ghose kabob* (roast meat). To top these vexations, the raspberry ice pudding appeared in a liquefied state, and had to be ladled out ; the butler too audibly whispering to his mistress that some fool had prematurely taken the pudding from the freezing can. These and more mistakes throughout, till the ladies made a move : then, after a smoke, when the men joined them in the drawing-room, the Vallentine sisters played an overture from *Zampa* ; Mrs. Stone followed by warbling “ Thy voice is near me in my dreams ” very sweetly ; Peutter gave them “ Kafoozlem ” ; and Ruby Gurder—who did not profess to sing—rattled off something out of *Faust*. This was all, barring the usual talk ; and when the music ceased, and folks began stealthily yawning, Mrs. Stone asked for her carriage. Final drinks were ordered in, and at last they all left, each averring that he or she had enjoyed a most pleasant evening, and so forth.

Thus the Station Dinner-Party came to an end.

## CHAPTER X

### THE STATION CONCERT

WHEN a limited Anglo-Indian community attempts a Concert, naturally our gentler sex are the chief promoters; and only those men who sing or play are commandeered for "turns." But even the selected males take no part in the preliminary arrangements: it is altogether a "hen" affair; remarkable—by the same token—for any amount of wrangling, argufying, and heartburning. Each woman—be she eminently qualified, or just able to strum "Lilla was a lady," and give "Rule, Britannia" in tune—thinks herself *the* one to organise the affair; and it is not till she is put down by an opposing coalition of aspirants for the baton that she retires from the contest—"cross as two sticks," and sullenly votes for some more popular member. The next point is to name the day—generally a signal for more discussion, because some of the prospective performers find other engagements clash. One has the doctor coming to lance her baby's gums on that day; another, an appointment with the European milliner, to be measured for a frock; while a third, who, though not having bought a yoke of oxen, and wants to prove them, expects her new waler by that very morning's train, and will be busy looking after him. At length, a suitable date is fixed; and now comes the most crucial question—the drawing up of the programme. As this requires

the co-operation of male eligibles, the women agree to complete their deliberations at the same hour on the morrow, at the elected lady president's bungalow ; in the meantime, to bespeak the attendance of the wanted he-fellows. The next morning, therefore, gentlemen as well as ladies show up at the rendezvous, where—after an infinity of cantankerousness on the part of the women, and amusement of the men, some of whom think it fun to set the former at loggerheads—the programme is framed : fair brows unknit, smiles appear, and sighs of relief are breathed. Then practice days are determined on. Some of the ladies propose that these be held at their houses, turn about : the majority object, and vote for the Club recreation-room, which is carried. There being nothing more to do, the assemblage disperses—the men chuckling, the women beaming, as if never a claw of theirs had been frequently itching to fly out of its velvet sheath during the debate. At the outset, the performers-to-be evince great zeal at the practices ; but this ardour gradually tones down as they master their respective parts, and the “ business ” degenerates into idling, larking, and downright tomfoolery ; one of them perhaps sitting to the piano and playing some absurd Yankee importation, while the rest caper about, to the diversion even of the presiding divinity, who, finding her calls to order totally unheeded, very probably joins in the fun.

The day of the Station Concert arrives : the entertainment is timed for nine-thirty, to allow of people dining comfortably beforehand. Everyone goes : the élite take the front rows, while the others fill up behind. European police sergeants

act as ushers and programme-distributers, and are not above taking a message to the refreshment bar. There is no curtain : the stage or dais shows the piano, and any other instruments that are to be used. At the last moment groups of bachelor officers from the mess-house over the way enter rather noisily—for they have just dined—and ensconce themselves where they can ; a bell tinkles ; the Station Concert starts, runs its course with more or less success, and—finishes.

One morning, news came that Sir Patrick Aughrim would shortly pay Chuchkipore his promised second visit ; and the same evening, at the Club, there was a grand pow-wow among the women on the subject.

“ I really think we ought to give something or do something this time,” observed Mrs. Stone, speaking generally.

“ Why ? ” queried Mrs. Boddikin, in a languid tone.

“ Because he made himself so agreeable during his last visit. True, you and Mrs. Slyce gave him some dinners ; but can we not get up something in which others can participate ? ”

“ A dance ! ” suggested Ruby Gurder, an ardent votaress of the light fantastic, rapturously.

“ Too hot yet,” vetoed Hilda Boddikin, shaking her head.

“ Amateur theatricals,” put in Vera Vallentine.

“ We’ve no time to get them up,” retorted the Colonel’s wife. “ But why not a concert ? That would not require half so much preparation.”

“ Happy thought ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Slyce,



generous for once towards her rival. "What say you, good people?"

"Yes! yes!" from all sides.

"Done, then! Now, who'll run it? Will you; Mrs. Boddikin? I'm afraid 'twould be beyond me."

A heated discussion ensued, which threatened to develop into a general quarrel till Mrs. Pontevedra opened her mouth for the first time that evening.

"Why not let Herr Neuweid manage concert?" asked she. "He knows what we capable of—gentlemen also."

"And would you contribute anything?" demanded Mrs. Boddikin, with a tinge of contempt.

"I can sing Portuguese gipsy song, and dance accompaniment," replied Mrs. Pontevedra modestly.

"I like the idea about Herr Neuweid," remarked Ursula Vallentine.

"So do I," added Mrs. Slyce and Ruby Gurder in a breath.

"Well, then, put it to him, and stop all this disputing, for goodness' sake," said Mrs. Boddikin impatiently.

To be brief, Herr Neuweid—by request—met assembled Chuchkipore at the Club next morning. The old Teuton's bonhomie, coupled with the amusement afforded by his quaint broken English, fended off squabbling; so the Herr—who knew the musical talents of all—speedily formulated a programme that met with universal approval; and he further offered to supervise the practices, to be held at Mrs. Boddikin's house, also to preside as conductor at the Concert itself—proposals which were eagerly jumped at.

"Ach!" grunted the German, taking a last

look at the drafft programme. "You zay dat Sar Aughrrim ees Irelandter?"

"Yes; very much so," laughed Miss Gurder.

"Eet ees peety we haf——" Abruptly breaking off and muttering in his own tongue, which nobody happened to be conversant with.

"What's that, Bandmaster?" queried Peutter, overhearing him. "Out with it!"

"Ach, sar, eet no importance ees. I vos teenking someteenk to myself."

Well, Sir Patrick arrived, and the Concert—given in his honour—duly came off. Though it went with a splendid swing, the various items—really creditably rendered—seemed to fall flat on the distinguished guest, and elicited from him no more than mild applause. However, when Mrs. Pontevedra's item had been given, and the National Anthem was about to follow as a finale, Herr Neuweid suddenly dived into the rear of the stage, and reappeared escorting Father O'Shagus, clad in his ordinary priestly attire.

"Laties and shentlemen," spoke the Herr, "I haf taken de liperty ov adding von item to our prokramme. De prriest, Vater O'Zshagus, vill giff Irelandisher szong to honour ov Sar Aughrrim! Fräulein," he continued, turning to Ruby, who sat at the piano, prepared to crash out "God save the King," "you vill allow me?"

He took his seat at the instrument, and after a short prelude, to his masterly accompaniment Father O'Shagus gave them "The Widdy Malone" with such rich Hibernian brogue and humour that not only took the house by storm, but completely woke up Sir Patrick, who followed every line with

interest, and who, when the clapping subsided, insisted on an encore, to which the good priest promptly responded by singing "Thady O'Flynn," with equal success.

The fact was that Neuweid, wise in his own generation,—an old Irish regimental bandmaster to boot,—learning that Sir Patrick hailed from the Green Isle, rightly conjectured that he would appreciate something typical thereof. None of the other folks were Irish ; so, unknown to a soul, the Herr had tapped the priest on the subject, found him willing, and the two had practised the songs together at the ramshackle little piano in Neuweid's quarters.

After that Concert, when Father O'Shagus approached the Commissioner with regard to the Catholic Mission, Sir Patrick came down with a donation so handsome as to nigh take the priest's breath away.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE STATION DANCE

ONE of the most prominent results of a Station Dance looming in the near distance is an unusual activity among the fair sex on the important matter of dress. Of course some are already equipped—they will sport a robe still sufficiently in fashion, and unhackneyed by too frequent local use ; but others, not so fortunate, and anxious to figure at the Dance in something quite new, rush off to the Europe-shops, buy material, and with bribes secure the services of the best native tailors to confection the garments against the great event—that is, if the place does not boast of a modiste from home. The masculines take it easier : no worrying over finery for them. They see to the ball-room, which has probably long been mute, resounding to no crash of dance-inspiring music ; the gas chandeliers are cobwebbed almost beyond recognition ; the punkahs want repairing ; while the *siplucks*, or house fly-catchers, abide in nooks and corners—as if the whole building belonged to them. The stewards busy themselves in superintending the waxing of the boards or proper lacing-up of the floorcloth, the renovation of the walls with white or yellow wash, the manufacture and erection of foliage wreaths, stars of sabres or bayonets, and the graceful draping of regimental colours, which in military cantonments are requisitioned on these occasions for decorative purposes. The chief difficulty to be overcome is concocting the pro-

gramme of dances. The younger, giddy-goat element of both sexes clamour for a preponderance of waltzes and galops ; the more staid wish for a stronger leaven of quadrilles, lancers, polkas, mazurkas, and Sir Roger de Coverleys ; while, to return to the other end of the stick, there may be some ultra up-to-date who hanker for barn dances, cake walks, and such-like modernities. The Managing Committee have a hot time in meeting all tastes ; and even when flattering themselves that they have done so, some obstructionists—women, as a rule—are sure to raise objections at the last moment and kick against too many dances of one kind to the exclusion of more of another kind. “ Why so few waltzes ? ” squawk they. “ Why so many squares ? ” “ Who wants Yankee jigs ? ” “ Why not have another cake walk ?—it is so amusing ! ” “ Why not cut down the galops and have a couple of cotillons—so as to give the older folks a chance of uncreasing their knees ? ” and so on. The best way of treating these outcries is to take no notice of them. When the malcontents corner a Committee man, and bombard him with importunities, such as above given, he shrugs his shoulders, says he can do nothing, and looks sympathetic, though mentally consigning the troublers to Jericho—or farther.

The Dance is subscribed for ; individuals—unless far up the tree—seldom giving one to “ their own cheek.” If there is a regiment at the place, the band provides the music, and the Mess the refreshments ; otherwise, the Club does the catering, and the devotees of Terpsichore depend on those among themselves who can play the dances on any instrument available, from a piano or a solitary violin—ay, down to a wheezy concertina !

Ruby Gurder's twenty-third birthday ! Ruby Gurder, the belle of Chuchkipore, and a general favourite with all. Her last natal day had come round shortly after her debut at the station, when she had yet to earn popularity ; so this—the following anniversary—her friends and admirers decided to signalise by giving the young lady a Dance. Everything was arranged, and that too with a minimum of ructions ; for Miss Ruby, when asked whether she would accept the proposed *tamasha* (festivity) in her honour, agreed *con amore*, but stipulated that there should be no *brouillerie*. Mrs. Stone, Mrs. Oskar, Mrs. Peter Parley, the Vallentine girls, Major Marmlaid, Gattable, Oskar, and Doalt formed the Committee of Management. The supper, etc., would come from the Mess ; the Neogee band, under Neuweid, would supply the music ; and the Dance be held in the Club ball-room—commencing at nine-thirty.

Ten days before the event, Mrs. Boddikin, driving into Jabbers's gates, encountered Mrs. Pontevedra ; driving out, with a big parcel on the vacant seat beside her.

" Good morning ! Going to buy something for Dance, eh ? " cried the latter cheerily in passing.

Beyond a distant nod, Mrs. Boddikin vouchsafed no reply. She looked down on the other woman as a make-believe—one who should not have been admitted to Station Society.

" I want a dress-length of stuff resembling this," said Hilda, fishing out a scrap of flimsy material from her bag and handing it to the obsequious shopman.

" I have sufficient for a dress, madame," replied

Jabbers, after examining the sample, "but not exactly of this shade or pattern."

"Let me see it ; perhaps it will do."

Jabbers fetched the stuff, and Mrs. Boddikin approving of it, requested him to give her so many yards—which, luckily, the piece just contained.

"Anything else this morning, madame ? "

"Yes : a pair of dancing shoes and long white kid gloves. You have my sizes."

Her purchases completed, Hilda hurried home, and immediately dispatched the *havildar* (sergeant) orderly to bring along a certain native tailor, the best in the place, and warning the N.C.O. to heed no excuse.

In due course the tailor appeared. At first, he pleaded too much work already on hand, owing to the coming Dance ; but when the lady promised him a *douceur* besides his charges, the fellow consented to take the order. Thereupon, the fair Hilda showed him the material she had just brought home ; also a robe—furnished only a few months previously by the famous Lucinda of Oxford Street, when Mrs. Boddikin accompanied her husband home on short leave to attend his sister's wedding. The tailor examined the garment in silent wonderment ; he had never seen the like before, but, being a clever, astute chap, he covenanted to make the new dress exactly similar to the pattern, and bring both home in a week from that date.

The Dance was held ; it went off grandly, to the great enjoyment of everybody except Mesdames Boddikin and Pontevedra—for lo you ! those ladies' respective ball-gowns were exact counterparts in material and construction ! Jabbers had sold one-half of that stuff to Mrs. Pontevedra five minutes

before the Colonel's wife took the other half, and the vender did not mention the fact to Mrs. Boddikin, who, had he done so, would certainly have declined the deal. What business was it of his? Money was money, and he would not turn it away when he saw a chance of making some; so he kept his mouth shut. Again, it happened that Mrs. Pontevedra had already bespoken that particular tailor to build her dress for the Dance; but, possessing the haziest notions of fashion and style,—a defect which caused her always to be more or less dowdy,—she had commissioned that sartor to exercise his own judgment, and do his best. The fellow,—keen-brained in one way, but an arrant dolt in another,—when in the sanctity of his little workroom he poured over Mrs. Boddikin's marvellous pattern frock, thought 'twould be no harm in making both garments on one and the same model. Thus, the fat fizzled in the fire when Mrs. Boddikin—entering the ball-room rather late—beheld in the despised “Post Office woman” an exact replica of herself! There was a brief wordy passage of arms betwixt the two ladies, while all looked on astounded. Mrs. Pontevedra tried to exculpate herself by throwing the blame on that blundering tailor; Mrs. Boddikin threatened to faint, and had to ask Peutter—not the Colonel—for her smelling-salts. An uncomfortable lull ensued in the proceedings; then matters smoothed down, and the festivity went on without further contretemps.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE STATION BANDSTAND

OUT in India there is no Bandstand without a Band to make use of it ; and, except rarely, there is no Band without military of some sort. At the Presidency cities a stray string or other Band, composed of seedy-looking foreign waifs, Indo-Portuguese, and Eurasians of varying shades, may be picked up on hire, who perform at middle-class weddings, dances, restaurants, and Goanese “ fan-dangoes ” ; the last an especial feature of the Bombay Presidency, where those peculiar people—the outcome of Vasco da Gama’s little trips to India—abound. The gradual growth of the Volunteer movement throughout the Empire since 1857–58 is responsible for some fairly creditable Bands ; and again, the more go-ahead Rajahs, Nawabs, and other native potentates maintain a body of performers. Not only those who contribute towards the Military Imperial Service in the shape of troops, drilled and equipped to our own standard, but others, who do nothing of the kind, often keep private Bands, chiefly with the object of discoursing music during entertainments to which Europeans—residents or visitors—may be invited. If the ruler concerned is enterprising or enlightened enough to engage a competent Bandmaster, well and good. The sons of the soil display great aptitude in learning our music if properly instructed, but they cannot pick it up intuitively ; so, in absence of efficient

training, "The Rajah's Band," as it is generally called, diffuses—not harmony, but the most excruciating discord.

Taking the large civil and military station of Bangalore as a sample, we may mention that it rejoices in many Bands : to wit, those belonging to the British Cavalry, the British Infantry, the three Native Infantry, the Volunteers, and the Maharajah—or seven in all. There are Bandstands in the Cubbon Park, the Lall Bagh Gardens, and the Maharajah's Palace grounds. At the first and second, the military Bands perform periodically, turn about ; the Maharajah's occasionally at the Palace, when His Highness is in residence, and the grounds are thrown open to the public. In addition, the several corps have rotundas of their own, where they practise, and sometimes play for the benefit of the regimental families and local residents. Then there are the parades, when the Bands play strictly martial music, either massed or individually—inspiring stuff to listen to. The Mess public guest-nights, the marching of the Tommies to and from church on Sundays, and military funerals are further calls on the Bands. Besides all this, the commanding officers are ever willing to lend their musicians for any gala occasions such as swell weddings, dances, and fêtes of all kinds. The Volunteer Band takes its share, but more with the middle-class and Eurasian element ; while the Maharajah's Band performs during Palace entertainments, and at the Residency, when the Viceroy's representative holds a garden-party or other Society function.

*Mais, revenons à nos moutons*—Chuchkipore, which has its solitary Neogee Band to depend upon. As we have already said, it plays for public behoof

twice a week in the apology for a park or garden, in a rustic woodwork rotunda devoid of all acoustic principles. At about three p.m., the "Park Keeper,"—an old soldier,—marshalling a squad of sweepers, goes round, tidies up the grounds, dusts the rotunda and the garden-seats, adjusts any flower-pots that may have toppled over; and while the veteran Tommy, cane in hand, struts about supervising the work, the sweepers stealthily wrestle for any stray cigar-butts left from the previous gathering. At five p.m. during the cold and six-thirty during the hot weather, the Neogee Band, under their *havildar* or sergeant, march in and fill the rotunda—to be presently followed by Herr Neuweid, who either walks or drives across in his comfortable little pony cart.

At the proper time the Band strikes up, and plays perhaps for half an hour to empty benches, unless you count the station children, who gyrate round the Stand in charge of betel-chewing *ayahs* or *beedee*—(native-made leaf cigarettes) smoking men-servants. The Band starts with an overture; and although not a single grown-up has appeared yet, it is amusing to mark the energy wherewith the zealous Neuweid conducts—flourishing his baton; and his indignation when some careless tootler—seeing no *sahibs* about—perpetrates a false note; how the scandalised Teuton scoots round, and gives the offending one a clip across the head. Anon, twilight fades; the *mussalchee* (lamp-attendant) ignites the lanterns, and then the Chuchkipore-ites gradually assemble, driving, riding, or walking—to start the usual gossip, interchange the news of the day, flirt, folly, and philander, paying but scant attention to the music. The gravel-sweep encircling the rotunda

becomes crowded with vehicles and equestrians, the garden-seats with loungers ; while the children, who have hitherto held the situation, go off home for tea and bed.

The Station Bandstand is open to all grades ; understrappers, European or Eurasian, so-called advanced natives, meet the élite on a common footing here. Mrs. de Souza, wife of the Municipal Overseer, in her bullock coach stares at Mrs. Slyce reclining in her elegant pair-horse evening barouche ; the Peter Parleys, in their dogcart, are wheel-to-wheel with old Pottigrew, Gurder's sub-engineer, and his wife, seated in a far superior trap (for Pottigrew has the preliminary handling of the engineering contracts, and—well, you know !). The Vallentine girls come on foot ; after waiting in vain for some congenial male spirits to take the two vacant places on the garden-seat they occupy, they suddenly find them filled up by stout Nurse Arrowroot and Apothecary Pedroza from Gattable's civil hospital—whereat the sisters flounce away in a huff. Erksom, Doalt, Ramskin, and one or two others besiege Ruby Gurder in her wagonette : she is by herself, for her brother, like Boddikin, does not patronise the Band. The conversation is necessarily carried on in a high key—to overcome the braying of the instruments. Ruby and the bachelors standing around her exchange the usual persiflage and badinage, altissimo ; which, reaching the ears of several Eurasian *kyranis* or Government clerks occupying a bench close by, they listen, grin at anything said that may strike them, and occasionally break into a hardly suppressed guffaw—an impertinence for which the other men feel inclined to punch their heads. Mrs. Boddikin—late, according to her wont—alights from her carriage ;

the faithful Peutter arises, ghost-like, from somewhere, joins the lady, and relieves her of fan or wraps—according to the season. They make for their favourite seat ; it is in possession. They go to another ; it is too near the illuminated rotunda. They seek a third, which is full up with what in these days are styled “ native ladies.” The exasperated Peutter wants to tell them to “ *jow* ” (“ git ”) ; his more prudent companion restrains him, for there are many “ native gentlemen ” about, who would resent such a mandate ; so they perforce return to the circle of vehicles. Hilda re-seats herself in hers, and Peutter would have got in too, had he dared. He therefore lolls over the side, and the two converse in undertones, their faces almost in contact. Other men of course keep clear ; other ladies note the little goings-on, and Mrs. Slyce, who commands a good view of the naughty couple, sniffs disapprovingly. *Mais, que voulez vous, mon ami ?*

Time passes : the Band has played the prescribed programme, and when the National Anthem rings out, the patient draft horses and bullocks awake up from their somnolence, for they recognise “ God save the King ” as well as you do ; coachmen and grooms ignite the carriage lamps ; good-byes are uttered ; the carriages roll away ; the Band clatters off to barracks ; and the rotunda is left once more to the bats and owls.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE STATION OFFICIAL BUSINESS QUARTERS

INDIAN stations that date from John Company's days are far-flung, scattered. John regarded the country as one vast Tom Tiddler's ground; built where he liked, and so substantially that many of his earliest creations are still in use.

The Sessions Court, the Collector's *cutcherry* (office), the Treasury, and the Police Office—known as the “Sudder” Buildings—were generally in one block, or close together; but other departments, such as the Post, the Surveys, the Engineer, and—later—the Telegraphs, were dumped down anywhere, perhaps miles away from the “Sudder” and each other. Since 1877, however, when the Crown assumed the reins of government, innovations have crept in: modern stations have been laid down on entirely new lines; while in older ones the official quarters have been concentrated as much as possible, either by transfer or the building of new ones. In almost every case the military cantonments—be the garrison large or small—are segregated from the rest: a wise measure, especially if there are any British soldiers among the troops.

Chuchkipore, while a station of old standing, has been so far modernised that most of the public offices are bunched together. Enclosing a little quadrangular *maidan* or open space—fringed with trees—are the Deputy Commissioner's imposing

Court-house, the Treasury, the Police, Post, Telegraph, Engineer, and Survey offices. Work begins early : the native staffs are all down by nine a.m. ; but the European heads do not appear till ten. Slyce and those others who seldom visit the districts attend regularly from ten to five—with a break from one to two for tiffin or lunch, which is brought over ; but Gurder, Doalt, Ramskin, and Pontevedra frequently go under canvas, their work while in Chuchkipore being more of a supervising nature, for their respective offices are run by competent men in charge, with establishments of subordinates. Each has his private room : the four conscientiously do what work there is ; but as a matter of fact they are frequently able to “ go easy ” while at headquarters, and it is often a case of “ beer and skittles ” during idle intervals.

To avoid the drive to and from their bungalows, their servants bring the tiffin in baskets to the offices ; any hot dishes being warmed on an *ughaytee* or portable fire-place, set going with a few sticks in the veranda.

Well, Doalt was the latest acquisition to Chuchkipore. Previous to his coming, the other men used to discuss their tiffin in solitude, smoke, and perhaps follow up with forty winks in a lounge chair, or read the paper till it was time to shut up, go home, and dress for whatever might be on. But Doalt was of a peculiarly sociable nature ; he soon found out that the other men, like him, tified in solitary state, and were often put to means of passing the hours till evening. One day, therefore, when his “ boy ” arrived with the tiffin basket, Doalt clapped on his sun-hat, and, pointing across to the Survey office, bade the servant follow him there.

"I say," he commenced, finding Ramskin about sitting down to his meal, "rather ungodly, isn't it, our feeding like so many hermits in their dens? Look here, I've brought my grub over; so if you're agreeable, old chap, we'll tiff together."

"Hurrah!" cried Ramskin pleasedly. "Happy thought of yours, Doalt. Come on!"

That initiated it, and soon a complete *bundobust* (arrangement, understanding) was established for tiffin and tiffiners to assemble daily in rotation at each other's offices. What work had to be done was generally got through during the forenoon, and the residue of the day, up to five p.m., was spent first in eating, then smoking, chatting, and conning the newspapers, attended with a good deal of hilarity.

All this was duly marked by the various subordinates, who, when they knew their superiors to be safely closeted inside, started a spell of *otium cum dig.* for themselves, aware that the officers—in ordinary course—would not disperse till closing time. What Slyce and the Covenanted men did concerned not our quartette, who deemed their tiffin reunions a grand idea; and even Gurder—more stolid than the others—praised Doalt for having suggested them. According to the home news, they discuss sport; cricket at the test matches; how this man scored; how another performed the hat trick; how a "dark horse" came in first at Newmarket or Ascot; how Oxford won the boat race; how "The Lost Tribes" beat "The Tramps" three goals to one; and how Ping defeated Pong for the light-weight championship. Then they turn to the Divorce Court stories,—told in newspaper English,—and chuckle over those of a



spicy nature, laying odds that the defence is all "d——d lies," and so on. No one indulges in a siesta ; they keep awake, and often become so noisy that the native clients—sitting patiently under the trees in hope of getting some order or engagement—creep into the veranda and peep fearfully through the half-curtained door, to see what the *sahibs* are up to. These proceedings speedily become bruited about the bazaars, and all sorts of people begin frequenting the public offices. Petty hawkers, snake-charmers, jugglers—noting the time and place of assembly—come, and, waiting till tiffin is over, present themselves at the door, and crave for patronage, often with success, as anything serves to kill time.

It was Pontevedra's day. Gurder and Ramskin had arrived, and they were wondering what had detained Doalt, when that youth appeared, in a white heat, followed by a strange-looking native with two tethered dressed-up monkeys on his shoulders, and leading a billy-goat.

"I say !" cried Doalt, bursting into the room, "I've brought along something new—a tragedy-comedy in simian life ! I've just seen it rehearsed over at my place, and laughed ready to split. The whole thing is so clever, yet so absurd. That's why I'm late. Come on ! let's dispose of tiffin, and then we'll have the show."

The meal over, they order chairs into the veranda, and tell the fellow to "ring up the curtain." He is a Punjabee Mohammedan, a *rara avis* in Chuchkipore latitudes ; and as he does all the talking in a tongue that would be unintelligible to the average reader, we will render it in English.

The *dramatis personæ* are Alum Khan, the man ; Boollooboolloo, the goat ; Murroad Khan, the buck monkey ; and Jahoorah Beebee, the doe monkey. Producing from his possible sack two little stools, the master bids the monkeys sit on them, and says to the male, " Rest yourself on the stool, O Murroad Khan, and gaze on the beauty of Jahoorah Beebee, your promised bride."

Whereupon Murroad Khan gibbers angrily at the man, shakes his head, and slaps himself on the stomach.

" Oh ho ! you mean you have no money to support a wife ? "

To which the monkey assents with an emphatic nod.

" Well, then, Murroad Khan, you must earn money. The *Sirkar* (British Government) is sending an army to Cabul : you are a brave soldier, so why not take service with the English lords ? "

Murroad Khan wrathfully screams his disapproval of the proposition, and sulks.

" Jahoorah Beebee," continues Alum Khan, addressing the she-ape, and calling her to attention with a jerk of the string, for she was absorbed in hunting her tail for fleas, " can you not persuade your lover to go to the war ? "

Jahoorah Beebee hops to Murroad Khan ; the two embrace and gibber in concert.

" Ah, good ! " observes Alum Khan ; " you have been giving him sound advice. He will come back safe, with much money for you. See, Jahoorah Beebee, how grand he will look, shouldering a musket ! " .

Here the man again dives his arm into the sack, and draws forth a battered tin toy gun, cocks it,

and hands the weapon to Murroad Khan, who, with another burst of rage, seizes the piece, turns the muzzle to his head, and inserting his foot into the guard, pushes the trigger, which goes off with a click, and he falls prone, as if dead.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" wails Alum Khan; "he has shot himself because you told him to go to the war, Jahoorah Beebee! Hasten! supplicate *Khuda* (God), and see if you cannot revive him!"

Jahoorah pushes Murroad Khan all ways; then catching on to his forepaws; raises him to a sitting position. Next, at a muttered command from the man, she lugs from a pocket of the polka-jacket-like garment she wears a tiny bag, which gives forth a chink as she hands it to Alum Khan, who, pretending to examine the contents, cries joyfully, "Ah, this your dowry, Jahoorah Beebee?"

Jahoorah Beebee nods.

"Is it enough to support you two for life?"

Again Jahoorah Beebee nods.

"Then Murroad Khan need not go to the war! Come! we will make our way to the nearest *Cazi* (priest), and you two shall be wedded at once! Up, lazy beast!" he adds to Boollooboolloo, the goat, who has hunkered down; and is assiduously chewing the cud, "up, and carry the happy pair to the holy man!"

Both simians vault on to the goat's back, and Alum Khan, making a short circuit, *salaams* profoundly to the audience, as much as to announce that the performance is over.

"Clever beggars, the monkeys," observes Gurder, as the Punjabee moves away, well satisfied with the money bestowed on him.

“ Yes,” adds Ramskin ; “ the plot, though, is a bit weak. But ’twould be fine, wouldn’t it, if women were provided with dowries on their wedding days, and chucked them over to their husbands as Jahoorah Beebee did—eh ? ”

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE STATION PICNIC

THERE are Picnics and Picnics : on the Potomac, the Nile ; amid classic ruins ; at the Pyramids, King Solomon's Mines ; even on the summit of mountains, or half-way down volcanic craters. The ordinary Picnic, however, in this country of England is rather a tame affair—more of a gala tea ; the principal diversion being the collection of sticks for the kettle, and the process of boiling the water. The weather is fine ; the excursion is formulated ; the train or hired drags land the Picnickers within easy distance of the spot ; the hampers—generally put up by some confectioner or caterer at so much a head—are toted along by the males ; the ground is reached, the hampers unpacked, the cloth spread, the kettle boiled, and the meal partaken of to the tune of much giggling and chatter. After this follow games, romps, or the rambling off of amorous couples, leaving the more staid to wash up, repack the hampers, and gossip till all reassemble, board the train or the drags, and return home.

In India, the Picnic is held under different circumstances. The exotics of an isolated Up-country Station must know of some really suitable whereabouts in the neighbourhood, with a good road leading to it, and free of risk from wild beasts or snakes. There is no railway, no drags, and no confectioner or caterer to make up the hampers ; so

when a Picnic is planned, and other conditions fit, the participants have to shift for themselves. Though a Picnic is a co-operative undertaking, it is not a signal for ebullitions of bad blood among the women—as in the case of Concerts or Dances; matters run smoothly. But of course contretemps may occur, for, as the proverb says, “The best cloth may have a moth in it.”

When the subject of a Picnic is broached, and received with favour, people meet in friendly consultation. Those who will join signify the fact; the locale is fixed on, and the date named. Folks who own conveyances offer lifts to those who do not; so parties are made up for the drive to and fro. The amusements are chalked out; and—strange, but true—the commissariat portion of the jaunt is almost always left to the ladies; who, in many instances, guard the secret of what they will contribute, not only from the men, but from each other—measures that occasionally result in farcicalities, to say the least.

“Great Scott!” puffed Gattable, entering the Club veranda, to find only a few men there, “the hot weather will soon be on us, eh?”

“Ay,” assented Marmlaid. “I was just thinking this morning if we oughtn’t to do something before the *tatties* go up.”

“What can we do?” grumbled Colonel Boddikin. “We’ve had a Concert and a Dance; the tennis tournaments have been played; and it’s already too hot for anything else that entails exertion.”

“I know!” suddenly rejoined Gattable—“a Picnic!”

Silence, then a buzz of approval ; and when the matter was put to the ladies later on, they readily acquiesced.

“ There has not been a Picnic since we’ve been here,” observed Mrs. Slyce, the oldest resident ; “ so it will be a nice novelty.”

“ Is the spot you mention quite safe ? ” queried Mrs. Stone.

“ As a house,” answered Gattable ; “ I know it well. Now, how shall we amuse ourselves ? ”

“ Badminton ! ” suggested Ruby Gurder ; to which all agreed.

“ That’s settled, then.” But presently, when the doctor alluded to the supplying of provender, none of the ladies made any remark except Mrs. Stone, who, speaking for the rest, said meaningly, “ Leave that to us. We each will contribute something. What say you ? ”

“ That’s the best plan,” observed Mrs. Boddikin. “ Having an unknown menu will be more fun than a ready-made one from the Mess or Club.”

Everybody concurred, and the point was carried. Then came the apportioning of seats in the conveyances ; and after a little more amicable discussion, the whole thing was satisfactorily fixed up.

Two days before the Picnic, there was a committee meeting of bachelors at the Club over some improvements to the Station swimming-bath. When they had finished business for the time being, Gattable, addressing the others, said, “ Look here—about the Picnic. I don’t know, but I’m rather doubtful regarding the supplies for the inner man, which, after all, is the main thing ; and it is just

possible the ladies botch it among them. I'm a bit anxious, as I started the idea."

"Ask them when they come this evening," suggested Ramskin.

"And get snubbed!" scoffed Gurder. "They'd not answer you."

"Then why not set someone to wheedle it out of them?" queried Erksom.

"Happy thought!" cried the medico. "We ought to know, so that, should they muddle the business, we can fill in deficiencies. Do you see?"

"True," observed Marmalaid. "Now, who is best suited to undertake the job?"

"Doalt!" exclaimed half a dozen voices at once.

"Will you, Doalt?" asked Gattable.

"Like a shot! I'm not afraid of them. When?"

"To-morrow forenoon. We shall be here, to wind up the bath affair, and will await tiffin for you."

Doalt promised.

Expectation ran high the next day, and the men, having concluded business, looked eagerly for Doalt. When at length he drove up, they could see that he was primed with something amusing, for he grinned from ear to ear.

"Well," he commenced, alighting, skipping up the steps, and significantly touching his breast pocket, from which a notebook peeped. "I've wormed it all out of them, and jotted it down. I never had such a lark in my life; and I was lucky, too, for every one of them happened to be at home—with no men about."

"Glorious!" cried the doctor delightedly. "How did you manage?"



"Soft-sawder, laid on thick, and a heap of lies—for which I hope to be forgiven by the ladies when they find me out," laughed Doalt. "I was mysterious, confidential, and pretended with each that, considering her as the fittest authority, I was consulting her alone on the subject. That fetched them—see?"

"Yes. Well?"

"I said that old Pottigrew, desiring to make some return for the treat we gave to the Station children, his among them, wished to contribute to our Picnic grub, as his wife is a first-rate cook; and that, if we could let him know what the lady most likely to turn out the best stuff had decided on sending, Mrs. P. would provide things that would not clash with hers. See?"

"Hah, hah, hah!" roared the crowd, in huge appreciation.

"Well, each confided her bill of fare to me. I totted them down, and here they are!" opening his notebook and reading: "Mrs. Slyce—cold pigeon pie, cold roast beef, jam tartlets; Mrs. Boddikin—cold pigeon pie, cold roast beef, open jam tart; Mrs. Stone—cold pigeon pie, jam puffs; Mrs. Oskar—cold pigeon pie, jam sandwiches; Mrs. Peter Parley—cold roast beef, jam roll; Vallentine sisters—cold pigeon pie, a cake; Mrs. Pontevedra—beef sandwiches, jam puffs. There! that's the lot."

A hush of astonishment, and Gattable murmured perplexedly, "How the devil have they hit on almost the identical things?"

"Easily accounted for," sniggered Doalt. "You bet they never talked the matter over. Guided by Beeton, or some other book of the kind, which gave cold pigeon pie, cold roast beef, and jam tarts of sorts as the *ne plus ultra* of picnic fare, each jumped

at the suggestion the book contained, never dreaming that her neighbour would do ditto. By gad ! I did have a time, keeping my countenance, and trying not to blush when lying like a trooper ! Boy ! whisky-and-soda ! ”

Gattable forthwith summoned the Club clerk, and commissioned him to furnish for the Picnic some roast fowls, a saddle of mutton, salads, vegetables, junkets; and ice puddings.

The Picnic went off splendidly, *malgré* the chagrin of the ladies on discovering how they had blundered. For all that, there was plenty to eat. Good-humour was soon restored ; everyone laughed ; and Doalt, after humbly apologising, received a general absolution from his sins.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE STATION GHOST

WHEN Government made Chuchkipore the circle headquarters of an additional engineering range, a recently married man named Tove came to take charge. They were a nice young couple, perfect *sahibs* (gentlefolks), and created a favourable impression on the residents. The only house available for the new people was The Folly, called so from its sequestered situation and ugly architecture. Slyce caused this dilapidated, unowned old bungalow to be made habitable for the Toves, although the place bore an evil reputation, and had not been occupied for many years. A single smaller building stood in the next enclosure, the property of one Harker, a military pensioner, who long lived there in total solitude, and who kept very much to himself; while across the road lay an ancient disused little cemetery, the tombstones dating back to the forties.

The Toves settled down, and when they called round were regaled with all manner of tales concerning The Folly: how it was haunted; how former tenants had been driven out by weird nocturnal noises; and also hinting at the uncanniness of the neighbour Harker.

Some time passed. The Toves were not molested by anything—supernatural or otherwise. One night they had been dining out, and returned home late, to find the lamps burning, and the domestics on watch. Candle in hand, Tove went round to lock

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up. The servants lay down in the front veranda, and all were soon in the arms of Morpheus.

An energetic whisper of "John ! John !" roused Tove, who saw his wife sitting up with an expression of alarm on her face.

"Halloa ! what's the matter, Milly ?"

"Listen ! There ! do you hear that ?"

He did hear. From the adjacent drawing-room came sounds as if several people were having a bolster-fight ! There were no voices ; but the pattering of naked feet, the blows of the bolsters were unmistakable. The two drawing-room sofas were furnished with a couple of bolsters apiece, which these night larkers were evidently using ! The Toves regarded each other blankly, till the wife told her husband to shout at them.

He did, feebly, for the words stuck in his throat ; but the thwacking continued, and, to make matters worse, the *ayah*, who had heard the sounds, slipped in from the veranda and began whimpering.

"Do go out and see, John !" urged Mrs. Tove.

He had to obey ; so, seizing the lamp and a stick, he threw open the door and sprang in. But lo ! the room was absolutely empty, the bolsters untouched, and the fastenings all secure.

"Extraordinary !" murmured the lady, who had followed, armed with a croquet mallet.

"It is ; for I'll swear there were people in here. God knows how they entered, and how they mizzled so quickly. However, I dare say we shall unearth something to-morrow, so come along back to bed."

The first thing next morning, the cook reported that, while awake in the veranda during the night, he saw Harker staring at the house through a gap in the dividing hedge.

“Is it possible that Harker had something to do with it, John?” demanded Mrs. Tove. “You know, the people here do not speak very well of the man.”

“He may have, Milly; and we must watch him.”

Accordingly, they made plans for the coming night. The cook was instructed to keep a sharp look-out, and call his master should Harker be seen. After dinner they retired, and, fully dressed, remained awake, listening for more bolster-fighting, or the cook's call. Towards midnight the cook did call them. They joined him in the veranda, and the fellow pointed to a human figure standing in the faint moonlight before the next house. Stealing out hand in hand, the Toves hid behind the hedge. Presently they heard approaching footsteps, and then saw Harker halted at the gap. Resolved to confront him, they moved up to the opening. For a moment they gazed mutely at the old man, who was dressed merely in his pyjama suit.

“Halloa, Harker!” shouted Tove, “what are you doing?”

Harker started convulsively, raised a hand to his forehead, and mumbled, “I'm sorry, sir; I'm a bit of a sleep-walker, I am, and beg pardon for disturbin' you,” saying which he turned away.

So that mystery was settled: nothing to fear from a somnambulist. They had a good laugh over the incident, and went back to bed, intending, this time, to sleep.

Vanity! They had dozed off, and slumbered peacefully till aroused by a repetition of the previous night's scrambling in the drawing-room. Tove again rushed in, to be sold as before: the room was perfectly empty.

"John," gurgled his wife, "surely it is not Harker!"

"Rather the fiend himself, Milly. We cannot allow this to go on; we must tell the folks at tennis in the morning, and get to the bottom of it."

There was no play that morning: the Toves' story created an immense sensation, and all sorts of solutions were advanced; some even suggesting that Harker—accompanied by spooks—entered the house by a secret underground passage. Then, when they had talked themselves dry, the whole party streamed over to The Folly—bent on exploration. Men stamped the floors, and women hammered the walls with sunshade-handles in search of cavities. From the front veranda they gazed speculatively across at old Harker—pottering about his compound; they invaded the little cemetery, and ferreted among the tombs for mouths of subterranean tunnels: this, that, and the other was advised, till finally Vera Vallentine, who all along pooh-poohed the ghost idea and ridiculed the Toves as a couple of sillies, volunteered to dine and sleep at The Folly that night—with a view to unravelling the mystery.

The valiant Vera arrived. They had dinner, and after the usual interval prepared to turn in; the guest electing to repose on one of the sofas in the drawing-room in preference to the bed-chamber made ready for her.

"I hope you will be comfortable, Miss Vallentine," remarked Mrs. Tove; "but would you not like a wrapper?"

"Oh no, thanks! I shall lie down just as I am; and so sure am I that the whole thing is a

delusion, that I could promise myself a good sleep were I not going to keep awake. Good-night ! ”

It was eleven now, and the disturbance had hitherto commenced towards midnight. Vera had a light with her : the Toves lowered theirs, and an utter hush reigned. Twelve struck, and the Toves lay still, wide awake. The gong had hardly ceased ere the couple heard a snore, evidently emanating from their guest, who must have yielded to drowsiness, in spite of her expressed intention to remain alert. Another snore, and then—the sound of bolstering ! Bounding off the bed, Tove prepared to fly to Miss Vallentine’s assistance ; for he quite imagined she would soon cry out for aid. For some moments they listened in vain ; but anon, instead of the expected scream, they heard Vera give a groan.

In they scurried, dreading to find the girl in the grip of a legion of devils, and the place topsy-turvy, whereas all was in perfect order—and tenantless, save for the young lady, calmly slumbering, unaffected by the racket that up to the previous instant had been going on around her. Mrs. Tove shook Vera by the arm.

“ Oh, it’s you ! ” observed the latter somnolently. “ Were you not tickling my feet, Mrs. Tove ? ”

“ No indeed ! We’ve just this moment come in. Why do you ask ? ”

“ Because I distinctly felt as if something was at my feet. I’m sure of it ! ”

“ And which made you groan ? ” queried Tove.

“ Groan ? ” she echoed incredulously. “ Nonsense ! There was nothing to make me groan. ”

“ No ? Well, unlike you, Miss Vallentine, we



kept awake ; and twelve had scarcely struck when the beggars started their games."

"What beggars ? Where ?" demanded Vera, now in a shaky voice.

"The men or fiends who lark about here at night. You snored twice, then groaned, whereupon we rushed in—expecting to find a vampire or something at your throat ; but you were serenely sleeping through it all. Now, what about the feet-tickling ?"

"Good heavens !" faltered Miss Vallentine, "*both* of you heard all this ?"

"Ay—both of us !"

"Well, I confess it—it—is beyond me, and—and—I think I had better go home. Your—your—joint testimony, coupled with—with what I felt at my feet, makes me suspect that—that there is some—some—truth in the stories connected with this—this—house !" saying which she nervously skewered on her hat, bid them a hurried "good-night," and, preceded by the cook, carrying a lantern, away she went.

The next day Tove got Slyce to give him quarters in a building used for storing records, which were removed into the court-house, there to remain till Government, on Slyce's recommendation, ran up a new bungalow for the Toves. The mystery was never solved, and probably remains a mystery to this day.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE STATION DURING CHOLERA

CHOLERA—Asiatic Cholera, grotesquely styled by Tommy Atkins “Corporal Forbes,” a corruption, presumably, of “Cholera Morbus,” the scientific name—is an epidemic very common in India. Without attempting to describe the pathology of this malady, we may mention that it attacks suddenly, the chief symptoms being painful vomiting and purging, followed by cramp, and then collapse. All are liable to Cholera, irrespective of sex, age, condition, strength, or weakness ; and it has been found that among the British soldiery out there the healthiest men contract the disease, and the sickly escape. The generally accepted cause is supposed to lie in polluted drinking water, while another theory points to over-indulgence in fruit, especially the luscious mango, which, coming in during the hot weather, is largely and imprudently partaken of by all classes. There are yet other assumptions ; but every one of them has given place to Koch’s germ-with-a-tail discovery. The conventional treatment of Cholera consists of chlorodyne, brandy, laudanum—administered at frequent intervals ; and external camphor-rubbing during the cramp stage, with certain injections, according to the nature of the case : but whatever is done must be done speedily ; otherwise, there is poor chance of saving the patient. What they call “English Cholera,” though exhibiting somewhat

similar symptoms, is not a patch on its Asiatic congener in virulence and rapidity of action.

One morning in the hot weather, a cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, but portentous of evil, threatened Chuchkipore : a case of Cholera occurred in the bazaar, and the same evening, Bashmill, the Neogeess' doctor, had two sepoys brought to his hospital, suffering from the disease. Gattable and Bashmill realised that the Station was attacked. Slyce, the chief authority, was notified of the fact, and all became activity—the activity of panic with some ; the calm, courageous activity of meeting the enemy with others. This season, the Boddikins had gone to the hills—Peutter, of course, with them ; Mrs. Slyce had taken her children up ; but the others were all *in statu quo*. Meanwhile the scourge alighted on Chuchkipore. The telegraph brought Colonel Boddikin, Peutter, and Mrs. Slyce hastening back ; for the two officers were bound to be with their regiment at such a crisis, and Mrs. Slyce, deeming her place to be with her husband, left her children in the care of friends, and returned forthwith. The cases multiplied alarmingly ; the Neogeess went under canvas, with isolation tents pitched to leeward for the sick, and Slyce ordered the prompt formation of a segregation camp for the townspeople. Sanitary laws were strictly enforced, and proclamation made warning the natives, under pain of dire penalty, against concealing any seizures. As if by magic, every native house, hut, or hovel was outwardly and inwardly given a coat of whitewash, mingled with disinfectants ; guards, military and police, were established some miles out on the main roads leading to the Station, armed with

power to subject all incoming travellers to a thorough examination, and to turn back any whom the native officer commanding the post suspected of being infected. Thus, every precaution was adopted against the spread of the scourge, even to the confiscation of all mangoes, found in bazaars or on trees, their wholesale deportation, under escort, to waste ground, and destruction by fire. Prayers went up from Christian church, Mohammedan mosque, and Hindoo temple, asking the One Universal God for aid, while all waited in anxious expectation for the daily reports dealing with the progress of the pest.

In spite of these expedients, the Cholera continued its ravages : the natives died "like rotten sheep," the Europeans hitherto being immune ; but now, a week after the epidemic began, a pensioned Irish sergeant, married to a black woman and settled down at Chuchkipore, while returning from the bazaar was taken ill, and that evening three faint volleys of musketry, floating up on the hot wind from the direction of the cemetery, told that the old soldier had been laid to his rest.

Ruby Gurder naturally felt anxious about her brother, who was in daily contact with crowds of coolie workmen, among whom the Cholera played havoc. Then when the Neogeas, infected badly, went into camp, and the officers, including Erksom, on frequent duty among them, the girl became apprehensive of her lover's safety ; but, true to her plucky spirit, and scoffing at the remonstrances of others, she rode to the camp every morning, and drawing rein to windward of the tents, had a scrappy confab with Erksom, who stood at a safe distance from her. And thus matters remained for some days, till quite

suddenly a marked fall in the number of seizures was noted, and lo! at the end of the week the scourge disappeared from Chuchkipore, to the intense relief of all concerned.

It was evening : the first general assemblage at the Club since the Cholera had taken wing, and when the doctors pronounced risk of contagion at an end. The heat did not allow of even badminton or croquet ; besides which, people had too much to talk about over the recent visitation.

“ Yes,” quoth Gattable, the centre of attention, “ I cannot recollect Cholera having sprung up so suddenly, made so many victims in such a short time, and then sheered off in this jack-in-the-box fashion—and I speak with no little experience.”

“ Oh, do tell us some of your reminiscences, Major Gattable,” begged Mrs. Oskar ; “ the subject is so horribly fascinating.”

“ Do you think so ? ” laughed the doctor. “ Well, as ‘ Corporal Forbes ’ seems to have really taken his departure, no harm talking about him a bit—is there ? Well, one hot weather, while I was temporarily doing duty with the —th Dragoons at Moul Ali, Cholera caught on to the corps, and we were for several months under canvas. At the commencement, the epidemic was general, affecting the whole brigade ; but as soon as the monsoon broke, the sickness abated everywhere except with the Dragoons. Anyhow, thinking the worst to be over, we returned to the cantonment. But the Cholera still clung to us ; it would not be shaken off ; so back we went into camp again, not at the same spot, but right away some five miles in the country, where new wells had recently been dug ; and, strange

to say, we had not been there three days before the disease left us. This set investigation afoot : we were ordered to stand fast, while the matter was being sifted. The water we had been using in barracks, and which had been brought out in water-carts to our first camp, was carefully analysed. It was found to contain Cholera poison ; and it was further ascertained that the water, before percolating into our wells, traversed a hitherto long-abandoned Mohammedan burial-place, but which, unknown to the military at least, had lately been re-opened for interments, and the consequent grave-digging had cut into the springs that fed the wells. This was the cause, so far as the Dragoons went. Those old wells were immediately filled up ; the civil authorities vetoed further use of that burial-ground ; the Dragoons returned to quarters ; artesian pumps were rigged, pending the excavation of fresh wells ; and those barracks, I believe, have been free of Cholera ever since."

" Marvellous ! " murmured Slyce, breaking the silence of conjecture that followed Gattable's narrative. " But to what do you attribute our Cholera ? "

" Infection from outside ; for we analysed all the water-supply in the Station, and found it pure. It was a ' marching ' Cholera."

" A sort of pestilence walking in darkness, eh ? " remarked Marmlaid.

" That's about it," chuckled Gattable.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE STATION CHRISTENING

A "Domestic Occurrence" in an isolated community of Anglo-Indians always arouses excitement—of pleasure at a birth or wedding, and of depression at a death. When a fair member of our little circle is destined to increase the population, the fact is proclaimed in various ways. Folks begin missing her, for she does not appear so often in public. If she attends a dinner-party, and is asked to sing or play, she shakes her head and glances apologetically at the hostess, who quite understands. If she goes to a dance, it is strictly as a wall-flower for the time being. She who hitherto shone at tennis, badminton, or croquet now sits among the elders, watching the game, but doing no more. At length she absents herself altogether, and then the whole Station knows that Mrs. So-and-so is "in for it." The men, of course, treat the news with unconcern—beyond laughingly rallying the husband on his expectations. But, heaven and earth, the women! They are early in the field of speculation and conjecture; then some intimate puts her the question; it is confirmed, and so "the murder is out." Eureka! pabulum for gup, topic for gossip of a most engrossing nature! Then the arrangements are criticised: half say that Mrs. So-and-so should be off to the hills while yet able to undertake the journey; the other half praise her for remaining where she is, and thus avoiding extra expense. The

doctor and the midwife are discussed. If several medicoes be available, their merits or demerits are canvassed : one is so nice and gentle, and charges so little ; another—the very reverse. This midwife is so clever, so deft, so light-footed, so temperate, so easily satisfied with regard to meals, and is so moderate in her fee ; the other one is such a gawk, drinks like a fish, wants all sorts of things to eat, and charges through the nose. Has Mrs. So-and-so been preparing her baby wardrobe ? or does she intend buying it ready-made ? If so, will she procure the infantile outfit in this country or from home ? Will she nurse her child ? Will there be a regular sit-down christening breakfast, or the vapid *pis aller* of cake and wine instead ? And so on.

“ Stale news, Nickey,” laughed Mrs. Boddikin, when Peutter informed her he had heard that Mrs. Peter Parley was in an “ interesting condition.” “ We know all about it.”

“ How ? ” he demanded, staring at her.

“ Don’t be stupid, and thank your stars you are not P.P.”

“ Mean to say you don’t envy the woman ? ”

A “ breeze ” might have followed this audacious remark had not arrivals interrupted the *tête-à-tête* betwixt these two, who happened to be early at the tennis courts. Later on, the subject was taken up by other women, and they talked of nothing else. The probable date of the event was mentioned, and Ruby Gurder coyly observed she had heard that there would be a Christening breakfast. The men, catching the topic of conversation, held aloof ; but when Bashmill put in one of his rare appearances, Gattable buttonholed him and led him aside.



"Well, have you settled it?" queried the civil surgeon of his colleague.

"All except a midwife," replied Bashmill ruefully, "and I cannot see my way towards getting one. Mrs. Peter Parley insists on the presence of a European or Eurasian nurse, although I've offered to attend single-handed. She objects to a native, and there's no time to import a suitable woman; for the affair may come off any day now. My hospital nurse being no good at obstetrics, I've tried amongst the half-caste band families, but to no purpose."

"Hum; unfortunate, that. My nurse, Mrs. Arrowroot, is no midwife, otherwise she'd take the job. But, now I think of it, why not have that Mrs. Bunker?"

"Who's Mrs. Bunker?"

"Half-caste wife of a platelayer at the railway station—she who brought that Mrs. Wisken through last year without my attending. Write to her."

Bashmill wrote. Old Mrs. Bunker came, was engaged, and took up her abode at the Peter Parleys' just in time to play her part. All went off well, and the young mother was so pleased with Mrs. Bunker that she insisted on her remaining till after the Christening.

In the meanwhile, Mrs. Peter Parley received many "kind inquiry" calls from ladies, who gingerly approached the house, as if afraid of waking the baby. The more intimate of these visitors were admitted; the others had to be satisfied with messages of thanks conveyed through the medium of Mrs. Bunker. Now Mrs. Bunker was a queer-looking person: she belonged to the old school of Eurasian; her colour was that of strong coffee;

she dressed in a single chintz gown, never wore hat or bonnet, but threw a skimpy shawl of glaring pattern over her head when going abroad; her hair, closely braided, glistened with cocoa-nut oil; while her feet exhibited French-grey stockings and country-made shoes. But her *chee-chee* twang was her chief peculiarity; you could "cut it with a knife." When Mrs. Boddikin called,—not to be admitted, although the Colonel's wife;—she was interviewed by Mrs. Bunker, who, acquainted with the fair Hilda's somewhat shaky reputation, was not very civil to the lady, which made her turn away in high dudgeon. Therefore, with her back fairly put up, on meeting Peutter that evening Hilda ridiculed the woman, told him of her rudeness, and asked if he could not play her some trick.

"Good idea!" laughed Peutter. "I've seen the old frump knocking about the station once or twice, and I'll think over it. Will she be at the Christening and breakfast?"

"Of course—to carry the baby."

"You'll be there, won't you?"

"Yes. Everyone is invited."

Christening Day. Half an hour before the appointed assemblage time at the church, Peutter—who, through the aid of his astute dressing-boy, had got all his information pat—suddenly appeared at Mrs. Boddikin's boudoir window, and without any preamble whispered, "What have you done with that whopping hat you wore last year?"

"Goodness—how you startled me! I've got it. Why?"

"Hand it over sharp—covered with a sheet. You'll know by and by. Ask no questions."

She gave him the hat, which, transferring to his dressing-boy, who had followed, he vanished. Having learnt from that dressing-boy that Mrs. Peter Parley would take her baby to church in Mrs. Slyce's closed carriage, lent for the occasion, and that Mrs. Bunker would ride in the Peter Parleys' led dogcart, Peutter, having concealed himself at a suitable spot on the route, pounced out on the old midwife, signing to the groom to halt.

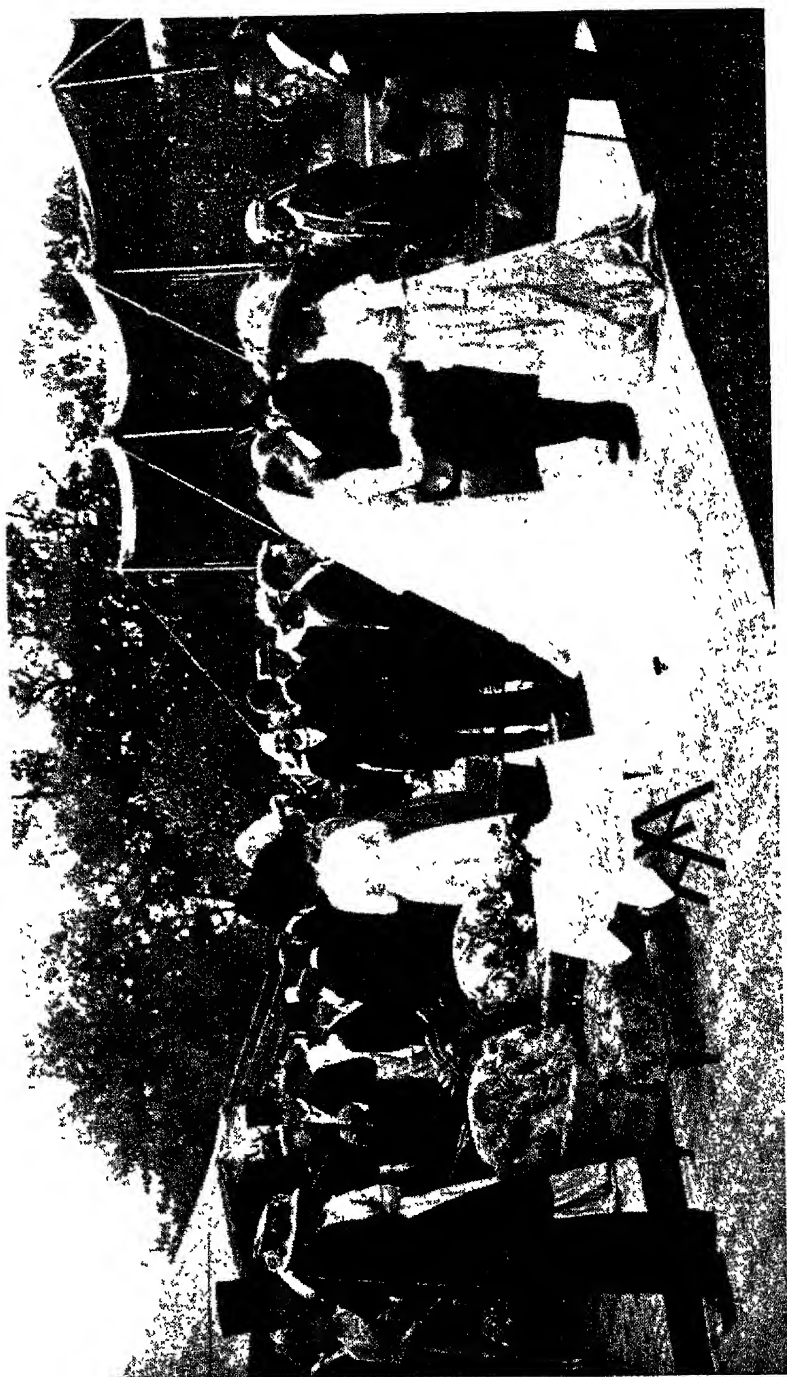
"Oh, look here, Mrs. What's-your-name," commenced Peutter, first assuring himself that the coast was clear, "a lady who thinks no end of you has asked me to beg you to wear this hat in church, and at the Christening breakfast. She says you would not look nice with a bare head at either, so here you are"—whipping off the sheet and tossing the preposterous hat—the size of an inverted laundry-basket, all ostrich feathers and goodness knows what not else—into her lap. "Keep the thing when you've done with it. You'll find pins somewhere in the crown; shove them through, and you'll be all right."

"Whaat, sar!" murmured the astonished old woman, at length finding her voice; "so many year I living; never put hat or bonnet on head! must put now, eh?"

"Of course! you'll show up splendidly. Take care to fix it on, or else you'll find yourself in a hole. I'll gallop on to the church and hand you out."

Even the Rev. Leyton Stone, who stood behind the altar rail, prepared to commence the ceremony, could not restrain a smile as, amid the ill-suppressed mirth of the congregation, Peutter, grave as a judge, escorted Mrs. Bunker into the





A WEDDING RECEPTION.

fane, with that prodigious hat sitting like an enormous extinguisher on her short-necked bullet head, and presenting a most laughable incongruity to the rest of her. It was some time ere the service could proceed ; people were in smothered fits, till at last, partially regaining their equanimity, the Christening was completed. But then, at the breakfast, when Mrs. Bunker—still under that hat—brought the baby in, everybody simply shrieked with uproarious laughter.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE STATION WEDDING

UNLIKE a Christening, a Station Wedding appeals to the male sex as well as to the gentler half of humanity, for it sets each man pondering over his own existing state of connubiality or celibacy. Some husbands bless the day of their linking-up, others curse it; while the engaged bachelor, all love-sick though he may be, is occasionally troubled with qualms as to the advisability of the step he stands committed to. On the other hand, comes a break in the everyday monotony. A Wedding brings festivity in its train: the assembly at the church, the breakfast, the speechifying, the asses some make of themselves over it, the cake-cutting, the champagne-quaffing, the cheering, the rice-showering, the slipper-throwing, the toasting, and the probable hop, held the same evening—though all this jollification may be qualified by the purgatory of wearing full dress for the greater part of the day and far into the night, especially if the Wedding takes place during any but the coolest time of the year.

At a big brigade station, a military Wedding is attended with a good deal of pomp and circumstance. As the hour draws nigh, the bidden begin to assemble at the church: the British cavalry drag—with its load of officers in their gorgeous full dress—is one of the first to arrive. Being early, they do not enter the church, but stay outside in the shade, chatting. Some old “mud-crusher” general-duty

Colonel or Major, thinking no one is there, canters in like a hogshead on horseback, and gets properly chaffed by the cavalrymen. The General's carriage rolls up ; people step across from bungalows close by ; while conveyances of various kinds set down their loads at the porch. A young " heaven-born," wishing to cut a dash by coming late, in order to show off a recently imported mare, drives her against one of the porch pillars, damaging his trap, and barking the mare's shins. And so the influx continues, till the sacred edifice is packed with an eagerly-expectant throng.

On the stroke of the appointed hour, the punkahs begin to swing ; the chaplain issues from the vestry, and takes his place within the altar railing ; anon, the clatter of many hoofs and rumble of wheels announce the approach of the bridal party. First, the bridegroom, with his best man, walks up the nave, and halts before the altar ; then a carriage, drawn by four battery horses, decorated with white rosettes and " tooled " by an artillery officer, brings the bride and her parents ; another disgorges the bridesmaids, and these move in procession up to the altar. The lady spectators are intent on the bride's dress, while the men surreptitiously take stock of the bridesmaids. Then, after a brief pause, the ceremony opens, continues, and ends. Now comes an adjournment to the vestry, for signing the register, which accomplished, the happy couple wend their way back to the main entrance ; the flower-girls strew flowers before them ; the organ peels forth the Wedding March ; the newly united pair acknowledge the congratulations showered from all sides ; and the company makes for the house where the breakfast is to be held. The feast is laid in



the drawing and dining rooms thrown into one, the former being specially cleared of its usual furniture. The two principals sit at the centre of the long table. The cake—a huge affair—is decorated with flags and flowers ; the board is loaded to profusion with good things. The chaplain is invited to ask a blessing ; which done, operations commence. The bride cuts the cake—with her husband's sword, or a borrowed one if he is a civilian ; there ensues an incessant file-firing of released champagne corks, while mirth and hilarity rise in proportion. When the inner man is satisfied, speeches and toasts are set going. The biggest guest proposes the health of the couple, which is quaffed "with honours" ; then someone makes a speech ; then the replenished glasses are emptied to the "Governor of the Feast," the bride's father or guardian ; a bachelor suggests a toast to the bridesmaids ; another bachelor says a few words of thanks on their behalf ; someone else perorates ; and the band now arriving, strikes up in the veranda. The fun continues, and by the time the programme of music has been performed the afternoon has worn on ; the guests commence to thin out ; and finally the festivity draws to a close. The bride, already changed into a travelling-costume, after saying good-bye all around, enters a carriage with her husband ; the usual felicitations, the rice and slipper-throwing, attend the movement, and lo ! they are off on the first stage of their honeymoon.

One steamy day during an auspicious break in the monsoon Ruby Gurder's Wedding to Erksom was celebrated at Chuchkipore, much on the same lines as above described, though of course on a less

extensive scale, owing to the small community. Mrs. Boddikin, in alliance with Mrs. Stone, superintended the church decoration; with Peutter as a sort of whipper-in over the natives employed on the work. Colonel Boddikin and Erksom's other brother-officers would stand the breakfast at the Mess; the Vallentine girls had joyfully agreed to be bridesmaids—the more readily as they were to be supplied with dresses, etc., by the bride, and perhaps to receive a locket or bracelet, the gift of the bridegroom; while Gurder would give his sister away.

All was ready, and everything promised to go off with *éclat*. The morning preceding the eventful day, however, Erksom came galloping over to the Boddikins'—in search of Peutter, who, as usual, was passing his leisure with the fair Hilda.

"Halloa! what's up, Erk?" demanded Peutter, going out into the veranda.

"I'm in a devil of a hat," growled Erksom, sidling his horse closer. "I've just had a wire from Beaker—you know, of Tonsdale's Horse, at Sargowlie—saying he can't come, owing to jungle fever. He was to have been my best man."

"Whew! Then what'll you do?"

"Get a substitute. I don't care asking any of the other fellows; so will you stand, old chap?"

"Of course I will!"

"Then shake!" cried the delighted Erksom, leaning from his saddle, and squeezing his friend's hand. "You're a brick! A little before eleven—at the church—mind!" And wheeling his horse, he rode off.

"I say," observed Peutter, in a tone of dismay, returning to his fair companion, "he has booked me

for his best man to-morrow. I've never acted in the capacity before. What's one supposed to do ? ”

“ Nothing particular,” laughed Hilda, amused at his perplexity. “ Stick by him, and keep the ring ready to hand to him when he asks for it.”

“ Have I to furnish the ring ? ”

“ You silly—no ! He will give it to you at the church.”

“ Oh, I see.”

Peutter, after a *tête-à-tête* breakfast with Mrs. Boddikin, at which they consumed a bottle of champagne, was up to time at the church, and duly received the mystic hoop from Erksom. The Rev. Leyton Stone walked over under a white umbrella ; people assembled, all more or less in a state of swelter—the women vigorously fanning themselves, the men nigh suffocated in full dress or frock-coats—in spite of the swaying punkahs. Peutter stuck religiously to his principal, and in due course the ceremony proceeded without a hitch till the ring was wanted. “ The ring,” whispered Erksom, turning to his best man, who, instead of complying with the demand, met it with a stupid stare.

“ Hurry up ! ” energetically muttered by someone behind brought Peutter round. He fumbled in his tunic pockets, but not finding the ring there, he by no means improved the situation by loudly blurting, “ Where the deuce has it got to ? ” which caused an irrepressible titter among the gathering.

“ Try your breeches pockets,” recommended Marmlaid in a comic stage whisper, which did not tend to restore gravity. Peutter, adopting the suggestion; dived madly into his trouser pockets ; but no—the ring was not there !

"Perhaps he has swallowed it," remarked Mrs. Boddikin in an audible undertone, setting several people sniggering outright. Ruby all this time stood calmly facing the altar; but Erksom had turned, and, heedless of the solemnity of the occasion; was grinning broadly. An awkward deadlock threatened, when Peutter electrified the assembly by suddenly shouting, "I have it!" and away he bolted down the aisle—to disappear into the vestry. Out he came almost immediately, holding his helmet and searching the interior; then giving vent to an exclamation of glee, he produced the ring and handed it to Erksom. The Rev. Leyton Stone—whose equanimity had also been disturbed to laughing pitch—paused a while to enable people to regain composure; the rite was then continued, and brought to a termination without further hindrance.

"Well, of all lunatics, you are an easy first!" chuckled Hilda in Peutter's ear, as presently he was handing her into her carriage. "What possessed you?"

"I put it into the lining of my helmet when Erksom gave it to me, and then forgot all about it. Your fault—for emptying the last of that champagne bottle into my glass at breakfast."

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE STATION FUNERAL

IN India, excepting at a hill station, with its temperate climate, the interment of our dead is rushed with almost indecent haste. A natural death may occur at night, and the Funeral is held the next morning; a man dies during the day, and that same evening sees him laid under the sod. Should there be anything in the shape of an inquest, it is carried out as quickly as possible; for on the sultry plains decomposition sets in as soon as the breath sets out; so a friend or relative not on the spot, and desirous of taking a last look at the deceased, unless he is sharp about it; will be too late.

A military Funeral in India is conducted with a certain amount of show, according to the dead man's rank, and the troops available for supplying the cortège. The entire function is confined to the army, from the officiating garrison chaplain to the youngest boy in the band. The corpse is conveyed to the cemetery on a gun-carriage, the coffin draped with the flag, and a band, heading the procession, plays the Dead March and other suitable music; there is a big turn-out of soldiery, and a firing party parades at the grave-side to render the last honours in the shape of three volleys of musketry; heads are bowed, arms reversed; the chaplain reads the impressive service; handfuls of earth are thrown into the yawning pit; the assemblage melts away;

the military march off, this time to an enlivening quickstep ; and—it is finished.

A civilian Funeral, on the other hand, has no such display ; and even when the deceased happens to be some high official, the obsequies are comparatively devoid of pomp and circumstance. At the Presidency cities and largest mofussil stations there are properly equipped undertakers—old soldiers generally—who make coffins, cut tombstones, repair carriages, and such-like odd jobs. They keep respectable hearses, and horses nearly black if not altogether that hue. Farther up-country, however,—at a place like Chuchkipore, for instance,—you may or may not find a Funeral-furnisher. If you do, he is anyone, from a retired Tommy to a superannuated pariah grave-digger. Anyhow, whoever he is, he is master of the situation, for desultory business of this kind does not produce competitors ; so when a civilian has to be buried, there is no choice. Our undertaker's hearse is an open-sided rattle-trap affair on apologies for springs, crazy wheels, and barely high enough to admit the coffin, which has to be coaxed in and coaxed out. The vehicle is supposed to be painted black-and-gold ; the latter being often represented by glaring yellow attempts at Prince-of-Wales' feathers or fleurs-de-lis. The horses, single or pair, are any colour—broken-down hacks, pressed for the nonce from the nearest native livery stable ; the harness, old, rotten, and patched with bits of coir rope ; the driver, a leery, arrack-swilling pariah rascal ; the attendants, more of the same kidney. This precious turn-out heads a procession of ordinary private or hired carriages containing mourners and friends : it goes at a snail's pace to the cemetery ; but when all is over, if you

are observant, you will probably see that hearse-driver lashing his screws into a gallop—with the attendants clustering on the roof, the steps, and actually one or more prone inside the space so lately occupied by the corpse! They don't care: they have evidently been tipped for their services; so all they now think of is to return to their master, unhitch, and then away to the nearest arrack-shop for a jolly booze. The mourners go home; the others, if it is evening, take a drive, discussing the virtues or vices of the departed one: they sigh, ask God to rest his soul, and very soon forget all about him.

Here, in England, the fact of a death is more brought home to you than it is out in India; though one would imagine that, from our very fewness, the taking of one member would cause a greater impression. But no; it makes very little difference. Beyond the knowledge that So-and-so has died, the circumstance—outside the entourage of immediate relatives or friends—stays in men's minds as long as water on a duck's back. True, amusements are in abeyance for a while, and the band, if there is one, does not play; but if the Jones's have planned a dinner-party, and the Funeral happens on that day, the Smiths, the Robinsons, and others bidden, go to that dinner-party, for the invitations are a week old, and the Jones' fattened calf must be eaten. So the party comes off, like other parties; the only difference being an assumed solemnity of mien, and the absence of the usual post-prandial music.

Here, to remind you of the presence of the King of Terrors, you have the drawn-down blinds in the contiguous houses; the imposing, catafalque-like,

plate-glassed, plumed hearse ; the following array of mourning coaches, with coal-black, high-stepping, flowing-main-and-tail horses ; the attendants, the drivers, all more or less rubicund, smug, muttoney, clean-shaven, suggesting so many priests or navy men—dressed like cabinet ministers, and wearing cabinet ministers' tall hats ; the tolling bells, the crowd of idling, curious women at the cemetery gates, and all the rest of it. These things marking a Funeral in this country tend to remind you that "in the midst of life we are in death" to a far greater degree than half a dozen such occurrences in India. It is a fact, though a sad one.



## CHAPTER XX

### THE STATION ADIEU

THERE is an end to all things, among them our long exile under an Indian sun, which, when it comes to a close—the joys, the sorrows; the advantages, the disadvantages; the ups, the downs of life in the East—pass away like ships in the night as we face homeward. Yes, there is an end to all things. Even the gentle reader will soon lay this book aside and finish with us; so we, in our turn, now bid him or her Adieu.

When it became known at Chuchkipore that our application for retirement had been sanctioned, our friends would hardly believe it. Marmlaid, for one, had all along scoffed at the idea. "They won't retire you yet," said he. "They know a willing horse when they get one, and they know you're still workable." Others backed the Major's view. They opened their eyes, therefore, when they learnt the truth, and at once began envying our luck. Our chum, the poetaster, happened to be out in camp when the news came; but directly he got back, and heard that we were really off in a few days, he squared his elbows and let himself out in an effusion, of which the subjoined is the first of twelve verses of the same kind of stuff. He got the lines typewritten somewhere, and sent them over in a formidable-looking official envelope,

superscribed: "With compliments, regrets, and best wishes"—

"'Tis hard to shake the hand, and to gurgle 'Fare you well,'  
To stay the rising tear, and the bosom's heaving swell,  
When one you care for turns his face t'ward Albion's distant  
shore,  
And you wonder if you'll ever see the beggar any more."

The next thing was to ascertain when that poor devil our relief would arrive: the answer to a prepaid wire of inquiry said "in about a month," giving us nice time to make our arrangements. A correspondence ensues with our agents and the P. & O. people at Bombay, culminating in the satisfactory announcement from the former that they have booked our passage on the mail ship *Manchuria*, sailing from Bombay on such and such a date, and enclosing our tickets—with the further pleasing intelligence that the ship does not promise to be overcrowded; that no children have as yet been booked; that our two-berthed cabin is on the main deck; that it is a good time of year, so far as the weather goes; and that the *Manchuria*, fitted with "wireless," etc., enjoys the reputation of being a perfect "sea-boat."

Now commence the final interviews with the natives. When we write and inform the landlord of our pending departure, he comes. He is a wealthy Hindoo of the old régime, unspoilt by over-education, visits to Europe, etc.; one who, by exercising respect for the ruling race, commands their respect in return. His canopied bullock-bandy (coach) stops at the gate: he alights, and creeps diffidently up the drive. While still some paces from the porch, he shuffles off his *joothies* or slippers, leaves them, and then, seeing us in the

veranda, prepared to receive him, he advances on his bare feet and makes us a profound *salaam*.

"Good morning, Maharaj" (literally "Prince," here used as a term of courtesy), we say, beckoning the man up, and pointing to a chair, which he gingerly sits down on. "What is the news?"

"All good news, your honour." The native's invariable response to the query, although a dire calamity may be threatening. "Only there is misfortune to this poor person, because of your honour's leave to the England. Who will occupy this bungalow? Who will pay regular rent—same like your honour for three years, and cause to landlord so little botheration?"

"Oh, don't be down-hearted, Maharaj. Mr. Skipjack, who replaces us, is sure to take on the bungalow, and pay the rent punctually."

"Thanks, sir," replies the rich old rascal, with evident relief. "Will your honour put the kind word for me to the gentleman?"

"Certainly."

"Thanks, sir. Then I will take leave. I will supplicate to God to bless your honour till end." And placing two tinsel-covered limes in our hands, he "takes leave."

Others come—our subordinates, the bazaar folks whom we have dealt with, the Police Inspector, the Municipal Overseer, the Postman, *et hoc genus omne*—to bid us good-bye, and perhaps prefer some request, such as a testimonial, a recommendation to our successor, or even to wheedle a tip out of us.

With our own people, of course, we are in hourly contact, and experience many helpful attentions from them. They are all very ready in the matter

of relieving us of our belongings. We draw up a priced list of them, and circulate it : they take generously—and that, too, without haggling or hanging in the wind ; for no sooner do we send the purchased goods over than back comes a cheque. We retain a few sticks, a few plates, etc., for our own use up to the last day ; and when the list finishes its round, these with the unsold residue are auctioned by Jabbers, who, good man, without waiting the customary days of grace, sends us the proceeds, minus his commission, before we leave.

We are fêted right royally : a succession of farewell dinner-parties, to be capped by a big feast at the Mess on our last night, to which the whole of Station Society will be invited to meet us. The Rev. Mr. Leyton Stone in his sermon during our final Sunday makes a graceful allusion to us, and invokes the blessing of God Almighty on our heads. At the big Mess dinner, Mr. Slyce speaks so eulogistically as to cause us to blush ; whereat Skipjack, though a stranger, pats us on the back, and leads the assembly in “ For he’s a jolly good fellow.”

The morrow. We had said good-bye all round the previous night ; but when we arrived at the railway station, we found a large number of our friends on the platform, to give us a send-off—the Slyces, the Stones, the Pontevedras, the Valentine girls, Colonel Boddikin, Marmlaid, Gattable, Doalt, Ramskin, the Erksoms, Gurder, and several other Neogee officers, who had actually brought down their band with them !

Well, the train steamed in. Hands were once more shaken, good wishes exchanged. We boarded,

the starting signal was given, and then—to the strains of “Auld Lang Syne,” much cheering, hat and handkerchief waving—we left them, never, perhaps, to see any one of them again! Our own reflections and the rhythmical clatter of the car wheels recalled Aliph Cheem’s—not the poetaster’s—lines, where he sings in one of his “Lays of Ind”—

“O India, land of glorious eves, of nights all but divine,  
The moonlight shimmering on thy leaves is not thy sole moon-  
shine.”

Reader, farewell !

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